

ORATORY

Civic Involvement

I. Introduction

In the National Hispanic Institute, we aim to build a new leader for the 21st Century Latino Community. At NHI, our goal is to develop community leaders who are engaged in the life of the Latino Community. Our prototype leader seeks to share his talents and skills with the Community in order to positively impact the lives of others. The cornerstone of our vision is Community Equity Building.

Civic involvement is a necessary component of community leadership. The civic sector of our community is the means by which we govern ourselves through non-governmental voluntary association. The civic sector (or as known in the social sciences, “civil society”) comprises the parts of a community that are voluntary in nature as opposed to the involuntary nature of government and the marketplace. According to the London School of Economics, civil society includes: charities, churches, community groups, women's organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, trade unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy groups.

Political scientists speak of the importance of “civil society” to communities. Civil society is the means by which communities build social capital and share ideas, trust and shared values. Political and social scientists have always observed how the actors and institutions amass political power without being appointed. In short, the institutions of civil society build a community’s strength and cohesion.

The National Hispanic Institute’s research paints a grim picture Latino civil society. Several Latino organizations have dissolved. The leadership of Latino organizations is aging as fewer and fewer young Latinos become involved in them after college.

II. Your mandate

In the 2008 YLC, we challenge Orators to take part in NHI’s goal of revitalizing the Latino civic sector. Your speech must meet three compulsory elements:

Identification of an area of Latino civil society or a Latino organization which is experiencing decline;

Establishment of a rationale for its continuation; and

Development of a program for promoting civic involvement in that area among young middle-school-aged Latinos.

A. Defining the Playing Field. Your first mandate is to identify an area of the Latino civic sector or a Latino organization that is in decline. It may be in any of the fields defined above. The areas of relevance to this topic is limited to charities, community groups, women's organizations, faith-based organizations, self-help groups, business associations, and advocacy groups

B. Developing a rationale. Next, you must identify the significance of this sector of Latino civil society or Latino organization. Market and social forces sometimes determine the life or death of organizations. Oftentimes, the reasons for an area of civil society no longer exist. Under this compulsory element, you must engage in strategic and marketplace analysis and determine the need for the particular area of Latino civil society or organization. Ask yourself what does this area or organization have to offer the Latino Community of the 21st Century? What makes it relevant in this new era? How can the area/organization be turned into a high performing asset for the United States Latino Community?

C. The Game Plan: Curriculum Development. From your analysis, you must develop a program that promotes participation by middle-school-aged Latinos in that particular area of the Latino civic sector or organization and then develops leaders for it. You must identify the necessary skills and capacities needed to lead that area and prepare activities to develop those skills in participants. This program will prepare leaders who will revitalize this area of the Latino civic sector or Latino organization.



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III. Guidelines and restrictions

A. Community Equity Building Principles. Because you are developing an NHI program, you must always keep in mind NHI's community equity building based analysis. You should look to the following criteria:

The undertaking must create something new, inspiring and enduring for the community.

It must promote the cultural values of Latinos.

It must promote the cultural, social and economic progress of Latinos.

It must not rely on government or corporations for its subsistence.

It must not rely on "minority status," "victim ideology" or reformism for its actions.

It must promote the belief that leadership is about a people as members of the community sharing their talents and skills with the community to positively impact the lives of others.

In short, you are creating something innovative and lasting. You are creating something that will inspire and motivate the Latino community.

B. NHI Curriculum Guidelines. Additionally, in developing an NHI curriculum, you must follow certain guidelines. NHI's "game technology" model includes the following elements:

It must be fun and interactive.

It must be multi-sensory in nature (i.e. contain elements that appeal to the 5 senses).

It must be self-illuminating.

It must be non-instructive in that it does not rely on lecture or classroom formats.

Because you are developing an NHI program, your program must not develop social advocacy/ reform type skills in participants. The curriculum must not teach skills such as protesting, petitioning, or organizing boycotts. In short, you are developing NHI-style leaders for that area of Latino civil society or Latino Organization.

C. Innovation. Your curriculum must create something new. It must not be a repetition of any existing program. Furthermore, it must not incorporate elements of any existing NHI program such as LDZ, YLC, CWS, MLP. Although this program is aimed at reviving something old, it must be driven by new ideas and strategies.

D. Logistics are irrelevant. The logistics of your proposal are irrelevant. Do not spend much time expounding on how you will procure funding, staff, facilities and supplies for the program.

For a more detailed treatment of Civil Society, see the Wikipedia entry entitled "Civil Society" at www.wikipedia.com keyword "civil society."

