

OLLU to mark 50th anniversary of 1968 Civil Rights Hearings

Conference will examine the progress of civil rights for Mexican Americans

Our Lady of the Lake University (OLLU) will host a national conference in November that reviews a landmark 1968 hearing on Civil Rights issues facing Mexican Americans and examines the progress that has been made for the nation's largest minority over the past 50 years.

"*Holding Up The Mirror: The 50th Anniversary of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission Hearing on Mexican Americans in the Southwest*," will be held Nov. 15-17, 2018, in Chapel Auditorium. Speakers include former U.S. Housing Secretaries Julián Castro, Henry Cisneros and Congressman Joaquín Castro.

The conference will include a retrospective look at the six-day, 1968 hearing — held at Our Lady of the Lake University on Dec. 9-14, 1968 — as well as a contemporary review of the civil rights challenges facing Latinos in education, employment, economics and the administration of justice. The chair of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Catherine E. Lhamon, and the staff director, Mauro Morales, will attend the conference.

"The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights was the first federal agency to spend resources in an attempt to examine the rights of Mexican Americans in the Southwest," said J. Richard Avena, retired Southwest Regional Director of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. "Fifty years later, a group of former employees of the commission, as well as academicians, legal experts and community leaders, will come together to see what changes have been made and what still needs to be done."



Left to Right: Maria Antonietta Berriozábal, Mario Compean, Congressman Joaquín Castro, Ignacio Pérez, Irma Mireles, Rosie Castro and Richard Avena —Photo taken at Castro's office in San Antonio, January 2016.

A native of El Paso, Texas, Avena attended the 1968 hearings on assignment for the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. He was supposed to spend six months in San Antonio. He never left.

Avena serves as a co-spokesperson for the "50 Years Later" project, along with Rosie Castro who attended the 1968 hearings as a student at Our Lady of the Lake College. She is the mother of Julián and Joaquín Castro.

The 2018 conference will feature civil-rights leaders, higher-education leaders and historians discussing current issues, such as changing civil rights, demographics, immigration, political participation and voting rights, as well as the critical issues of 1968.

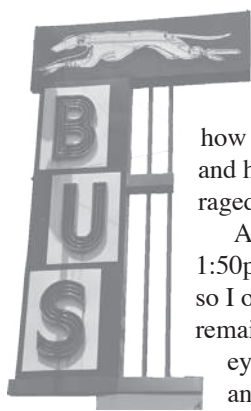
At that time, for example, Bexar County had nine school districts. All of them, except one, were led by Anglo male superintendents. Today, Latinos and other minorities serve as superintendents in the San Antonio ISD, Edgewood ISD, Judson ISD, East Central ISD and other area school districts.

The 1968 hearings drew severe criticism from the established leadership in San Antonio. But the Rev. Theodore Hesburgh, president of Notre Dame University and vice chairman of the commission, offered this response: "All we do is hold up a mirror to the community and let them tell us if there are any problems. And that's what we're doing here."

For more information visit: www.50yearslater.org.

Bus Ministry

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sinks. It works, he's ok. I gift the book to him, knowing it will keep him occupied during the next 48 hours. The three of us hug several times and I tell her how ashamed I am of how they were treated, and how many people across the US are outraged and sad and are supportive of them.

After a big group of moms leave on the 1:50pm bus, the next bus out isn't until 4:30pm so I offer the River Walk tour. Almost all of the remaining moms take me up on it. The kids' eyes light up at the waterfalls and fountains and ducks and tall buildings. The moms look relaxed and this provides a bit of time for

chatting. One mom told me that had she known what the journey would be like before she left home, she would not have done it. It has been horrible. Like waiting in Reynosa for three days and nights with no food or water, as the Mexican police took every-

thing she owned. And that once, the border patrol found her and put her in the Hielera (icebox), where the best that was provided to them was frozen sandwiches literally thrown at them as though they were dogs.

None of the moms I met yesterday had been separated from their child to another location. Those that I asked replied, *I would die if that would have happened*. Some of the most vulnerable are those who don't even speak Spanish, who speak an Indian dialect from deep rural Honduran or Guatemalan villages, who often cannot read and rarely have a dime. Imagine how they feel.

So glad for this opportunity to help these brave women, though I have no plausible solution for how to fix this broken immigration system surrounded by so many broken countries. On the way home from the bus station, NPR was running stories about how credible fear interviews are increasingly difficult to pass, and that immigrants are being deported at the border itself in increasing numbers within the past few weeks. I guess the moms I am seeing are the lucky ones. For now.