LAYC’S BRIGHT FUTURE

What exciting news! Here is an announcement just received: “Venture Philanthropy Partners (VPP) today announced a $1.5 million, multi-year investment partnership with the Latin American Youth Center (LAYC) to support the LAYC, including establishing a new site in Prince George’s County in a unique partnership with the Archdiocese of Washington, headed by Cardinal Theodore McCarrick. A separate $1.25 million pledge from The Fernandez Foundation … to the Cardinal’s capital campaign will help strengthen the Archdiocese-LAYC effort.

“As part of its strategic business plan, the LAYC is expanding its operations into Maryland, including sites in Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties, to better meet the needs of children and youth in a demographically changing National Capital Region. This multi-site expansion effort is called the Maryland Multicultural Youth Center.

“The Archdiocese selected the LAYC as its primary partner to execute the LAYC’s proven youth development model at the Archdiocese’s future Langley Park Family and Youth Opportunity Center – the only one of its kind in the Diocesan network and this region. … LAYC Executive Director Lori Kaplan said of the planned expansion to Maryland, ‘Support from VPP provides a firm foundation from which the LAYC can expand its services to new sites to stem gang-related violence and address other issues facing today’s youth in the region.’ … Kaplan remarked on the opportunities she sees for the organization and the youth they serve saying, ‘As a result of the business planning process, we were able to clearly identify the areas in which we need to focus to reach our aspirations. It’s exciting to be able to respond to the changing needs of the diverse group of youth in such concrete ways.’”

THE DROPOUT CRISIS

Our title is also the title of an important report issued as the result of collaboration between Harvard University and the Urban Institute. The short summary is that our country has a high percentage of dropouts (those not completing secondary school), and for Latinos as well as Blacks and Native Americans, dropping out reaches the emergency level. Here is some of what the report states: “In an increasingly competitive, global economy the consequences of dropping out of high school are devastating to individuals, communities and our national economy. At an absolute minimum, adults need a high school diploma if they are to have any reasonable opportunities to earn a living wage. A community where many parents are dropouts is unlikely to have stable families or social structures. Most businesses need workers with technical skills that require at least a high school diploma. Yet, with little notice, the United States is allowing a dangerously high percentage of students to disappear from the educational pipeline before graduating from high school.”

What about the county situation? The report covers several local jurisdictions; their graduate rates are Prince George’s County, 69%; Montgomery County, 84%; Fairfax County, 86%; DC, 65%; and Baltimore City, 48%. Of course, these figures in part reflect the socioeconomic status of the families ramifications. For instance, fully 42% of Prince George’s County’s schoolchildren are sufficiently economically stressed to quality for free or reduced price meals. The figures for the other comparison jurisdictions are 22%, 17%, 69%, and 72%.

“Losing” continued on Page 2
The report states that the official figures underestimate the dropout percentages because of the self-serving way that many school systems report dropouts. Prince George’s County almost certainly engages in the self-serving. This publication’s estimate of the dropout rate for immigrants living in Langley Park is about 50%. But whether it’s 45% or 50% or 55%, the Harvard/UI report is a terrible indictment of public schooling in the United States. Maybe we should start with an emergency effort within Prince George’s County. Certainly, it’s better to be in school learning rather than on the street doing other things. What’s the educational equivalent of 911?

SHORT TAKES

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: Alas, domestic violence is too prevalent in and around Langley Park – and perhaps in most parts of the world. (At least here we don’t burn widows or mutilate genitalia.) One of the people working to help victims of domestic violence is Ginny Heredia. The Family Crisis Center counsels people at the Langley Park Community Center on Thursdays from 11 a.m. until 3 p.m. Women known to be victims should be encouraged to get help; it’s no good to suffer in silence, and police will help if there is a potential for danger. In an emergency, call the Domestic Violence Hotline, 301 731-1203. For a counseling appointment, call 301 779-2100.

SCHOOL BOARD DUMPS ESL? It has been reported to us that PGCPS has decided no longer to run the county’s ESL program. Now, the program is to be put up for bid. Will PGCC take over? Some non-profit organization? We can hope that whichever organization is approved to run ESL takes it very seriously and works for improvement. Most immigrants want to be fluent in English, but they need help with our challenging language.

QUEBEC TERRACE: In January, a team of interviewers headed by Laurel Chase spoke with residents of houses along Quebec Terrace to determine what they liked and disliked about their area. Most of the respondents liked the area, especially its convenience to shopping and transportation. However, there were several common complaints: the gang activity and related crimes nearby, the speeding along Quebec, and the many cars parked along the street by apartment house residents. At least speeding has an easy solution: speed bumps. How about it?

ICE: In early January, President Bush made the recess appointment of Julie L. Myers, a lawyer, to head the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) bureau at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). This native of Shawnee, Kansas, is the niece of former Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman Richard B. Myers and the wife of the chief of staff at the Department of Homeland Security. In past positions, she has focused on security fraud and money laundering. Alas, she has no experience with immigration matters and reportedly has yet to display managerial ability. Even the National Review folks showed concern: “Just three days after Michael Brown resigned as head of Federal Emergency Management Administration because of the botched response to Hurricane Katrina, the Senate held a hearing for another unqualified nominee for a vital position in the Department of Homeland Security. The president’s supporters can look forward to serving in his administration, but certain key jobs ought to be reserved for candidates whose personal connections do not outweigh their professional qualifications.” And from the political left: “This nomination is a monumental political and policy blunder in the wake of the Michael Brown/FEMA fiasco. And I can tell you that… rank-and-file DHS employees and immigration enforcement officials are absolutely livid…” As the saying goes, it’s who you know (or whose genes you have or with whom you go to sleep), not what you know.

FOOD VENDORS: Rumor has it that County Councilman Will Campos will introduce legislation to remove the women street vendors who sell fruit and drinks, and sharply limit the number of mobile food vans. Apparently, however, alternative sites for these micro-entrepreneurs will not be provided. And so opportunities for cheap and convenient food as well as socializing centers will be eliminated. If this legislation passes, it may solve what some people think is a problem, but it may well create others. Is social class a factor?

REAL ID: This legislation, passed last Spring, is becoming a nightmare for state officials in Maryland and elsewhere. The cost will be very high, and you know who will end up paying for it. Maybe Congress could revisit the legislation and save us all a lot of money – and also save us from a de facto national identity card.

MEDIKAID: Within the almost-800 page budget bill scheduled for a final vote on February 1 is a provision that requires Medicaid applicants to document their U.S. citizenship by showing a passport or birth certificate. Bob Herbert writes in the New York Times (5 January) about “a nasty little provision, ostensibly aimed at immigrants, that will make it difficult for many poverty-stricken U.S. citizens to get the health care they are entitled to under Medicaid. Advocates believe that the provision, which will require Medicaid applicants to document their U.S. citizenship.” Ah, Congress.

PG DAY LABOR CENTER: Alas, the news is not good; negotiations for space along University Blvd. just east of Riggs Road have not yet paid off. We wait. And hope.

BLP CORRECTIONS

We are delighted that issues of Barrio de Langley Park are carefully read (well, at least by some people!). And thanks to the careful reading, we have two corrections to make on Issue #59.

• MARYLIN? BARBARA! The issue referred to Maryland’s Senator Mikulski but used the first name “Marylin.” Alas. Our Senator’s name is “Barbara Mikulski.” Thanks to Alex Hirtle who was the first person to point this out. [Who is Marilyn? Maybe Marilyn Monroe?]

• ANCHOR BABIES: In Issue #59, this passage appears: “Birthright citizenship exists when children born in the United States to undocumented immigrants, called ‘anchor babies,’ automatically become U.S. citizens, allowing for their parents and other family members to apply for citizenship once the child turns 18.” Thanks to Karin Dalichow of the Law Foundation, we have a needed correction: “Under current immigration law, any immigrant who has entered without inspection (illegally) or has been here undocumented cannot adjust their status (apply for residency) without undergoing a 3-10 year ‘punishment’ by returning to their country of origin. Therefore, it would take approximately 28 years for an undocumented person to obtain residency through their child.” [Family values?]
PUNISH IMMIGRANTS!

The U.S. House of Representatives has passed HR 4437, which many observers see as legislation to punish immigrants. In early January, CASA de Maryland held a legislative action session to prepare volunteers to explain the bill and work to make sure that it does not become law. The handout used at the session is the basis of what follows. What a dangerous bill for all of us.

- Make unlawful presence in the U.S. a crime — a shortcut to authorizing state and local police to enforce federal immigration law.
- Make conviction of unlawful presence in the U.S. an aggravated felony, which could make millions of undocumented immigrants permanently ineligible for any legalization program.
- Expand detention of non-U.S. citizens in removal proceedings.
- Expand the definition of criminal “alien smuggling” in such a way that anyone who assists an undocumented person to live or remain in the U.S. could be charged with a criminal offense.
- Require the expedited removal of non-citizens (except for Mexicans, Canadians, and Cubans) apprehended within 100 miles of the border within 14 days of their arrival in the U.S.
- Gut due process protections and access to judicial review for immigrants.
- Create a phone and Internet-based employment eligibility verification system (EEVS) that all employers would be required to use, as well as all those who recruit or refer individuals for employment, including labor agencies and nonprofit groups.
- Dramatically expand passport and document fraud provisions and penalties, expand mandatory detention to apply to more categories of immigrants, broaden the aggravated felony definition, and create new grounds of admissibility and deportability.
- Authorize the forfeiture of property by persons convicted of fraud of documents and or one’s passport and its seizure by the government.
- Require the DHS secretary to collect data regarding unauthorized non-citizens who receive medical care after being encountered or taken into custody by the Border Patrol.
- Require the construction of a fence along the U.S.-Mexico border.
- Authorize state and local police to enforce federal immigration law
- Requires ten fingerprints (rather than just two) be collected for each person whose fingerprints are required.
- Withhold funds from state and local governments deemed to have policies preventing their cooperation with federal immigration law enforcement.
- Enter certain immigration information into the National Crime Information Center database.
- Prohibit the use of Border Patrol uniforms made in Mexico. (Surely, this is a joke?)
- Eliminate the diversity visa program.
- Require that foreign embassies be notified when citizens of the countries they represent have renounced their allegiance to foreign countries and sworn allegiance to the U.S.
- Delay indefinitely applications for adjustment of status or other immigration benefits if fraud by the applicant is alleged.

What about the view from the borderland where implementation of the bill would be centered? Here’s a portion of an article in the Brownsville Herald (14 January 2005): “The courts are already just flooded,” said Lisa Brodyaga, an immigration attorney with the Refugio Del Rio Grande, a nonprofit organization. “They are swamped. For every case that needs a public defender, it also needs a judge, so funding on this would be prohibitive because you’d not only have to double the size of the public defender’s office, you’d have to vastly increase the federal judges and increase the prisons to house these people.” Processing one person for illegal entry through the federal courts usually just takes one day, [a public defender] said, but upgrading the charge from a misdemeanor to a felony would add from three to six months to resolve the cases. And while immigrants wait for their day in court, they must be housed in a jail with taxpayers footing the bill.

MURDER, MURDER, MURDER

The year 2005 was a bad one for 173 murder victims in Prince George’s County. This number, a record-setter, was less than registered by our D.C. neighbors by 21 murders, but it was well above our nearby counties. Furthermore, a large percentage of Prince George’s County’s murders remain unsolved. (The information comes from the police departments via the Washington Post, 2 January 2006.)

The unhappy figures may reflect the overload on the police officers given the county’s understaffing. (Note that DC’s solution percentage is well below the figure for Prince George’s despite having almost three times the number of officers!) After all, given the current force and the number of police calls during the year, each officer — assuming s/he is one of the officers who respond to calls — must respond to several calls every day of the year. And we expect our police officers to patrol, keep records, appear in court, come to “community meetings,” smile at us, and more. There may also be an issue of assignment priorities; the attacks on adult clubs might drain resources from the effort to reduce acts of violence.

The county is planning to increase the number of police officers up to and perhaps beyond the authorized 1,420, but whether this can make a difference in a county with many neighborhoods of poverty and violence is certainly unknown. We can hope! Perhaps more funds for schools, community centers, and other organizations that might steer young people in non-violent directions should be a matter of urgency for our political leadership. In that regard, expanding the Langley Park Community Center (and transferring the regional administrators so that more space is available for neighborhood activities, health screenings, and more), building the Mother Teresa Center, and perhaps relocating the Boys and Girls Club across Merrimac Drive are steps that come to mind.
OUR POPULATION FUTURE

There is no doubt that the population of Langley Park, Prince George’s County, Maryland, and indeed the entire USA is changing. Currently, the Latino (Hispanic) population constitutes about 15% of the total—basing this figure on the census plus guestimates on the uncounted residents. But in the future, that percentage will rise significantly. This can be seen by looking at the population pyramid of Latinos and, for comparison, European-Americans.* As the graphic shows, the population bulges of the Latino population are among the young, in contrast with the European-Americans’ bulge in the middle—and the difference is muted by the census undercount. The latter folks just don’t make that many babies. For instance, in the 20-24 years-of-age category, 75% of European-American women are childless and the children-per-1000 figure is 358. But for Latinos, the numbers are 53% childless and 780 per-1000. Other age categories display a similar contrast. (We will not explore the question of what the European-Americans are doing in their private moments.)

The population youth-bulge can also be seen on the streets of Langley Park as well as in the classrooms. But the question arises: What will the Latino children be doing when they reach their 20s? Will they have high school diplomas? College degrees? Will they be significantly represented in white-collar jobs and CEO positions, or will they fill the ranks of the blue-collar workers? Will they have a good income, or one that keeps them at the socioeconomic margins—perpetuating marginality?

There is some evidence that the longer a Latino family lives in the USA, the more their fertility and associated statistics tend to conform to the national norm. For instance, in the 20-24 age category, 47% of the women born in this country are childless; but only 26% of the Latinas born outside the country are childless. There is a similar contrast with regard to number of children per 1000 women: 1119 for the USA-born versus 1727 for those born outside the country. Presumably, the greater educational and employment opportunities here, as well as the associated cultural changes, bring about the fertility decline.


REPRESENTATIVES: If you want your representatives to take some action (or not take it), contact them. It’s easy by telephone or email. Here is some contact information:

- **U.S. Senator, Maryland: Barbara Mikulski**
  (202) 224-4654, ttp://mikulski.senate.gov/contactme/mailform.html

- **U.S. Senator, Maryland: Paul Sarbanes**
  (301) 589-0797, http://sarbanes.senate.gov/pages/email.html

- **U.S. Congressman, District 16: Chris Van Hollen**
  (301) 927-5223, http://www.house.gov/writerep/

- **Maryland Senator, District 47: Gwendolyn T. Britt**
  301 858-3745 or Gwendolyn.Britt@senate.state.md.us

- **Maryland Delegate, District 47: Doyle Niemann**
  301 858-3326, Doyle.Niemann@house.state.md.us

- **Maryland Delegate, District 47: Rosetta C. Parker**
  301 858-3326, Rosetta.Parker@house.state.md.us

- **Maryland Delegate, District 47: Victor R. Ramirez**
  301 858-3326, Victor.Ramirez@house.state.md.us

- **County Council, District 2: Will Campos**
  301 952-4436, WACampos@co.pg.md.us

CALENDAR

- **February 9:** Monthly ALP open meeting featuring a reports on legislation in Annapolis and the plans of the Latin American Youth Center’s Maryland initiative.

- **March 9:** Monthly ALP open meeting featuring reports on the Governor’s Commission on Hispanic Affairs and plans of the Washington Adventist Hospital.

- **April 13:** 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.: Job fair at Greenbelt Marriott. Call 301 670-2500 for information.

- **April 20:** Monthly ALP open meeting featuring the final planning for Langley Park Day 2006.

- **May 7:** noon until 4:30 p.m., Langley Park Day 2006 featuring a health fair with doctors, dentists, nurses, chiropractors, family counselors, etc.; music and dance; educators, lawyers, children’s activities, food and craft vendors, and more. Balloons too.