

HISPANICS PUSHING CITIZENSHIP DRIVE

Daily News (New York)

November 29, 1995, Wednesday

Copyright 1995 Daily News, L.P.

Section: Suburban; Pg. 3

Length: 503 words

Byline: By BLANCA M. QUINTANILLA

Body

Saying current laws make immigration difficult and citing a rising wave of anti-immigrant feeling, prominent Hispanic leaders are urging some 150,000 permanent residents from Central and South America who live in Queens to become American citizens.

"The doors are closing down," said Elizabeth Aivars, a Venezuelan-born attorney with the city's Law Department. "It's important for these people to become American citizens and exercise their right to vote."

The cry for action emerged during the recent day-long First Hispanic Leadership Congress, held in Long Island City, where Hispanic leaders troubled by what they called a rising anti-immigration feeling sweeping the country vowed to double their aggressive drives to increase citizenship and voting registration among the Hispanic residents of Queens.

"The next presidential election in this country is going to be a question of life or death," said Kathy Andrade, an officer with the Hispanic Labor Committee, who told an immigration forum that Hispanic residents need to get involved in a wide range of issues such as the proposed sale of Elmhurst Hospital Center, and electing politicians to represent their interests.

Armed with the latest set of figures she could get from the city Department of Planning, Aivars said some 381,120 Hispanic people live in Queens roughly 20% of the total borough population. The Hispanic population in the borough has experienced a 44.6% growth since 1980, according to city figures.

But the immigration panel agreed that the numbers probably far exceed the official count, because illegal immigrants do not necessarily advertise their presence to census officials.

Ruben Quiroz, director of Accion Latina, a group promoting awareness of important issues in the Hispanic community, said anti-immigration feelings have rekindled during the last two years, as Washington politicians have used immigrants as scapegoats to explain the evils plaguing the country.

"We have been witness to this campaign to eliminate certain rights and impose these restrictions," Quiroz said. "The purpose of this anti-immigration campaign is to stop immigration altogether, and to yank the growing political power of Hispanics in this country."

He said a recent study showed that in 10 years, in cities such as like New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Miami, and Dallas, Hispanics will elect politicians and will control those cities' economies.

At the local level, Aivars said, Queens Hispanic leaders are doing a good job of promoting citizenship drives, but she said more work is still needed.

HISPANICS PUSHING CITIZENSHIP DRIVE

"There are still 150,000 people in Queens that didn't become citizens," Aivars said. "Let's go find them, let's make a list; let's get them involved. . . ."

Quiroz said eligible residents undergoing the ***citizenship*** process complain it takes about a year to do so in Queens. He said leaders would like to see the government open up a new ***citizenship*** processing center in Queens to handle the increased demand.

Graphic

JOE DeMARIA DEPUTY Queens Boro President Peter Magnani speaks at Hispanic Leadership Congress at Con Ed Learning Center. DIRECTOR of cultural affairs for Queens Aida Gonzalez-Jarrin.

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Subject: HISPANIC AMERICANS (91%); IMMIGRATION (90%); ***CITIZENSHIP*** (90%); CITY GOVERNMENT (90%); POLITICS (88%); CENSUS (78%); CAMPAIGNS & ELECTIONS (78%); CIVIL RIGHTS (77%); ELECTIONS (76%); LAWYERS (75%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (73%); HEADS OF GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS (71%)

Company: LET'S GO PUBLICATIONS INC (50%); LET'S GO PUBLICATIONS INC (50%)

Industry: LAWYERS (75%)

Geographic: NEW YORK, NY, USA (95%); CHICAGO, IL, USA (79%); LOS ANGELES, CA, USA (79%); NEW YORK, USA (79%); UNITED STATES (93%); VENEZUELA, BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF (79%); SOUTH AMERICA (79%)

Load-Date: November 29, 1995