

Latino Activists Here Protest California Beating

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Body

Latino activists in Washington gathered last night to try to galvanize anger over the **beating** of two illegal immigrants by police in Riverside, Calif., into political action.

About 100 people gathered outside the White House to **protest** the April 1 **beating** of a Mexican man and woman believed to have entered the United States illegally.

Videotape of two deputy sheriffs clubbing the two as they tried to flee a pickup truck has recalled images of the **beating** of motorist Rodney G. King by Los Angeles police officers. **Protest** organizers said they want swift action in the case, which began when officers chased a truck filled with people.

"We are here because we are hungry for justice," said one of the vigil organizers, Pedro Aviles, of the **Latino** Civil Rights Task Force. He spoke as the protesters huddled together under a chilling drizzle. Some held slim white candles; others gripped signs declaring "No Human Being is Illegal" and "Ms. Reno, We Demand Justice in Riverside," addressing Attorney General Janet Reno.

The **protest**, Aviles said, also was meant to energize local Latinos for a national voter-registration drive.

Latino Vote '96, he said, will officially start in the District on May 5, the fifth anniversary of the disturbances in the Mount Pleasant area of Northwest Washington. The 1991 disturbances in the heavily **Latino** neighborhood were sparked by the shooting of a man by a D.C. police officer during an arrest.

Saul Solorzano, executive director of the Central American Research Center, said the voter registration campaign is significant for immigrant issues. "It is one of the fastest ways to get our community's concerns to be heard," he said.

Speaker after speaker called the **California beating** racist and an example of the type of police brutality that occurs in minority communities but, until videotaped evidence was available, seemed unnoted by the rest of the country. Ronald E. Hampton, of the National Black Police Association, told the crowd that blacks and Latinos have a common interest in battling such brutality. "It's time for us to stop being victims," said Hampton, who worked for 23 years as a D.C. police officer.

The American Civil Liberties Union, the Archdiocese of Washington and the Latin American Youth Center were among other organizations represented.

"It's unfortunate that we have to depend on the luck of a video camera for this to have this brought to stark reality," said Mary Jane DeFrank, head of the local ACLU.

Classification

Latino Activists Here Protest California Beating

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