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Latinos and Labor

Challenges and Opportunities

Andrés Torres

The growing presence of Latino workers in the Massachusetts labor force presents opportunities as well as challenges for the labor movement. An overview of occupational, industrial, and unionization patterns helps to describe the potential for Hispanic contribution to renewed union strength in the region. But revitalizing the house of labor in the twenty-first century requires an innovative interplay of workplace and community strategies. As labor comes to terms with its multiracial/multicultural constituency, the relationship between class and race/ethnicity is being revisited, as is the very definition of "labor movement."

The growing Latino population is a significant feature of the demographic trends transforming the Massachusetts landscape during the 1980–1990 decade. Combined with an even more vigorous growth rate among Asian-Americans, and a steady expansion of African-Americans, this pattern will usher in a new era of cultural diversity and political complexity in the commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Latino visibility spurred increasing interest in the potential impact of the community on various aspects of the regional scene. Among the subjects of research and analysis are language and culture, political participation, socioeconomic conditions, and social institutions.¹

This article addresses a notable lacuna in the burgeoning literature relating to Hispanic Massachusetts: the role of unions in the life of the community. The sparse attention to this issue may be understandable, given the somewhat limited scope of union activity compared with other forms of Latino social action and in light of the still modest visibility of Latinos within the official labor movement. Nevertheless, we should caution ourselves — Latinos and non-Latinos concerned with progressive social change — against ignorance of this potentially vital nexus. It is my premise that labor needs Latinos as urgently as Latinos need labor.

The recent past offers some examples, national and local, illustrating the grave anomalies faced by labor. Three items of note:

1. The Dunlop Commission, formed by President Bill Clinton to assess the state of labor-management relations in U.S. industry, will provide counsel on how to improve employee involvement in America's corporations. Make work more interesting and

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“As with other racial/ethnic minorities, Latinos in America learn to live in different worlds simultaneously, sustaining multiple identities. Some view this as resistance to assimilation and argue that it impedes socioeconomic mobility. Others acknowledge it simply as a survival strategy, a coping mechanism, which allows outsiders to hang on to their culture as they make their way through an often hostile environment. Ethnic identity becomes a valuable resource in dealing with the atomization and competitiveness of modern U.S. society.”

— Andrés Torres

rewarding, decentralize the decision-making process at the point of production, upgrade workforce skills: these are the new, cutting-edge ideas for spurring worker productivity.

2. In Watertown, an electronics factory is a showcase for industrial flexibilization. Immigrant workers are heavily recruited, and they are expected to perform various functions and even change production routines on a regular basis. The pay is barely enough to support a family, but employees have other incentives to stay with the firm, namely, special services like free English as a Second Language classes. The classes are funded by the federal Joint Training Partnership Act.

3. In early 1993, Dennis Rivera, a rising Latino figure on the political scene, was appointed to one of President-elect Clinton's transition teams.

What is missing from this picture? Labor. Neither the Dunlop Commission nor "flex-tech" models such as we see in Watertown assume a role for unions. The talk is of providing workers with alternative forms of representation and bargaining power in the form of quality work groups and the like. Rivera, head of a major health care union,² and the highest-ranking Latino labor leader in the country, is invited to participate in the Hispanic policy transition group, not a labor-issues team. Viewed by the official labor movement as a maverick, he gains access to the administration through his ethnic identity.

My objective in the following pages is to identify sources in the incongruities between Latinos and labor and suggest how they can be overcome. The existence of these discontinuities seems quite severe in Massachusetts, a lamentable situation given the union movement's long and courageous history in the region and its success in serving as an antipoverty vehicle for earlier immigrant populations from Europe.³ Furthermore, there is a sad irony in this discrepancy in light of the deep tradition of labor struggle in Latino countries of origin, and the overwhelming working-class composition of commonwealth Hispanics. I examine issues on both sides of the awkward and often uneasy relation between Latinos and labor. I begin with a demographic snapshot of the Latino labor force, nationally and locally.

Latinos in the Labor Force

By 1990, Hispanics comprised 8 percent of the U.S. labor force, 10.2 million workers, of whom 59 percent are male, 41 percent female.⁴ The share of employment has risen steadily in the last decades, the product of a twin expansion. On the one hand, already established groups such as Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans have extended their presence through intergenerational growth, with fairly high birth rates compared with the U.S. average. Also, since the late 1960s, immigration from Mexico, Central America, and the Dominican Republic has channeled new cohorts of Latinos to the labor market.

Expectations are that by the year 2005, this working population will reach 17 million; official studies project that Hispanics will account for one of six new workers between now and then.⁵ Since these numbers do not reflect undocumented workers, they underestimate the true extent and impact of the Hispanic presence.

Hispanic unionization rates parallel the U.S. average, roughly 17 percent overall.⁶ As with U.S. workers in general, Latino union membership has declined in the face of economic stagnation, globalization, and the shift from manufacturing to services.

Table 1

Occupations of Employed Hispanic Civilians in Massachusetts, 1970-1990

Occupation	1970	1980	1990
Total: All civilians	2,306,866	2,670,388	2,992,000
Total: Hispanic civilians	21,000	44,982	83,000
Executive/administrative/managerial	5.9%	05.2%	5.5%
Professional	14.1	11.0	8.4
Technicians	2.8	2.6	3.4
Sales	3.9	4.6	8.1
Clerical/administrative support	15.2	14.4	12.6
Services	12.8	15.9	28.4
Production/craft/repair	10.6	10.4	10.6
Machine operators/assemblers	27.1	26.3	14.5
Transportation/material movers	1.7	3.1	2.4
Laborers/handlers/helpers	4.1	5.5	5.3
Farming	1.8	1.2	0.9

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census of the Population: General Social and Economic Characteristics*, PC(1)-C23; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of the Population: General Social and Economic Characteristics*, PC80-1-C23; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Geographic Profile of Employment and Earnings*, 1991.

In this, Latinos differ from African-Americans, who have achieved some inroads in the heavily organized government sector. Despite the ebbing tides that have reduced average earnings in the U.S. economy, Latinos who belong to unions earn 50 percent more than their unorganized counterparts.⁷ Many changes have been wrought on the economic landscape in the era of restructuring, but one factor seems to remain constant: union membership makes a big difference. This seems especially so for minority workers, who lack access to many of the levers of political power.

Massachusetts Hispanics constitute 4.6 percent of the population.⁸ Boston is home to 58,000 Latinos, who comprise 11 percent of the city's populace. As in other regions, where much larger concentrations are to be found, Latinos are a rapidly growing contingent within the commonwealth. However, they remain underrepresented insofar as their share of the labor force is concerned.

In 1990, Hispanics comprised 2.8 percent of the Massachusetts employed civilian population.⁹ The disparity between share of population (4.6%) and share of labor force (2.7%) is an indicator of the economic vulnerability of the community. To the degree that population share exceeds labor force share, this signals the fragile condition of the community's income-generating base. The disparity is due to the relative youthfulness of the population as well as the accumulated impact of human capital shortages, discrimination, and economic restructuring. Another troublesome sign is the extent of joblessness: Latinos have the highest unemployment rate (15.1%) in the commonwealth.

The relation of these patterns to group socioeconomic status is obvious: lagging job access means low labor force participation and consequently high poverty rates. Indeed, the poverty rate for Massachusetts Latinos (37%), the highest in the state, is a level that greatly surpasses the rate for Latinos nationally (25%).

The kinds of jobs held by Massachusetts Latinos conform to expectations one might have about an "outsider" group.¹⁰ Their occupational distribution is skewed toward low-

Table 2

**Occupations of Employed Hispanic Civilians in Boston, 1990
(Nonagricultural Workers)**

Occupation	Total
	100.0%
Executive/administrative/managerial	6.8
Professional	8.1
Technicians	4.5
Sales	7.6
Clerical/administrative support	12.9
Services	36.0
Production/craft/repair	8.0
Machine operators/assemblers	7.0
Transportation/material movers	1.8
Laborers/handlers/helpers	5.3

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Geographic Profile of Employment and Earnings*, 1991.

wage categories within manufacturing and service industries (see Table 1). Seven of every ten workers (71.4%) are situated in low-wage fields, concentrated in five of the eleven major categories.¹¹ Occupational crowding has remained a constant for the last two decades; since 1970 the picture is unchanged. It is alarming to note that on the other end of the occupational spectrum, the proportion of Latinos holding jobs in the three most highly paid occupations — administrative, managerial/professional, and technical — has actually declined from 22.8 percent in 1970 to 17.3 percent in 1990. Survey data show that holding a job does not necessarily guarantee an escape from poverty: among Boston's Hispanic poor, 42 percent are employed and two-thirds of them work full time.¹²

Table 2, focusing on Boston residents in 1990, paints a similar picture of Latino concentration in generally low-wage sectors. Again, roughly seven of ten employed persons (69.2%) hold such jobs.

Latinos in Massachusetts Unions: Membership Levels

Union membership patterns are dictated largely by these occupational and industrial characteristics. Unfortunately, hard numbers on the count of Latinos in each union are unavailable for Massachusetts. There is no official data base that includes information on ethnicity of rank-and-file members. For this study, I conducted an informal census with the assistance of leaders and members of union locals known to represent some Latinos. Additional information was provided by participants and informed observers of the labor movement in the commonwealth.¹³

Table 3 lists unions in the state in which Hispanic members make up at least 5 percent of the rank and file according to estimates compiled in our survey. Organizations with a significantly larger concentration, 20 percent or more, are denoted with an asterisk.

As is to be expected, Latinos are a significant force in unions that organize low-wage manufacturing and service sectors. Figuring prominently are the hotel and restaurant,

Table 3

Massachusetts Unions with at Least 5 Percent Hispanic Membership

ACTWU (Lawrence)
AFSCME Council 93 (municipal/state employees)
AFSCME Local 1489^a (municipal hospital employees)
AFSCME Local 470 (mental health workers)
AFT Local 929 (teachers and aides)
HRIEBU Local 26^a (hotel/restaurant workers; 5,000 members total; 60% workers of color)
IBEW Local 369 (telephone utility workers)
ILGWUa (various Massachusetts locations; 33% Latinos)
IUE Local 201 (General Electric, Lynn)
LDCIU Local 66^a (laundry workers; 600 members; 80% workers of color)
SEIU Local 254^a (maintenance workers; 5,000 members; 30 percent minorities)
SEIU Local 285 (hospitals, health care throughout Massachusetts)
SEIU Local 509 (city and state agencies)
UAW 65-Local 2334^a (day care, social service agencies; 800 members; 40% Hispanic)
UF&C Local 1445 (food store employees)
USWA Local 8751 (school bus drivers)

Source: My survey; see text.

^aUnions with Hispanic membership of 20 percent or more.

garment, laundry, building maintenance, and day care/social service industries. Also important is the municipal hospital sector, but as elsewhere, Latino workers are overrepresented in the lower echelons of the occupational ladder, among maintenance and clerical workers. Sources indicate that the three unions with the largest numbers of Latinos are the Service Employee International Union Local 254 (building maintenance workers), the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, and the Hotel and Restaurant Industry and Bartenders Union.

Though the Latino presence in the labor force is hardly overwhelming, I would argue that it bears more than a little significance for the labor movement. This is true because the Hispanic share of the overall labor force is expected to rise dramatically in the years to come. The relative youthfulness of the resident population and the likelihood of continued immigration mean that Latinos might easily double their 1990 numbers by the year 2000. This is a promising trend for labor, since, in most regions, Hispanics have demonstrated a greater propensity than other workers to support unionization.¹⁴

Second, Hispanics — like African- and Asian-Americans — present a new set of political challenges and opportunities. How will social movements like labor, which aspire to represent broad strata, adapt to the changing composition of population? What new practices and strategies must be envisioned to bring about multiracial/multicultural institutions that are effective and empowering? In light of these inquiries the relation between labor and Latinos — and by extension, African-Americans and Asian-Americans — seems a compelling metaphor for America's struggle with diversity.

Latino Participation in the Labor Movement

If we lack accurate data on the scope of Latino union membership, our knowledge of the extent of Latino participation is even less precise. While there is a modestly growing base of documentation relating to organizing efforts in the region, details concerning

Hispanic life within unions, and the union responses to the growing presence, is scarce.¹⁵ With respect to leadership development, the picture is not any clearer. On a positive note, I can report that for the first time in recent memory, a Latino was elected president of a union local.¹⁶

In the last few years, there have been several union organizing drives involving Hispanic workers, with Latinas playing a prominent role. Unfortunately, information gathered on these struggles has been sporadic and anecdotal. What we do know, based on preliminary research, is that immigrant workers have shown initiative and enthusiasm in their efforts to win basic workplace rights. However, they face severe obstacles in the current political and economic climate. Also relevant to the outcomes of these campaigns are the internal dynamics of a workforce stratified by gender, language, and national origin. These issues are alluded to in an assessment of an almost successful organizing drive, that of a major footwear company in which the majority of the workforce were Latinos and the pro-union leadership predominantly female.

At first, workers at this plant mobilized because of a change in hours and in the incentive pay system. They initiated interviews with several union locals, selected one, and organized the drive for card signature themselves. Faced with employer opposition to recognition, the union went for a certification election under the jurisdiction of the regional National Labor Relations Board. The length and complexity of this process was not understood at first by workers who expected immediate union representation. Furthermore, the certification campaign took place in a context of active employer resistance and implied threat of a plant relocation in the event of a pro-union majority. Afterwards, union organizers reported that they were unable to overcome fear of job loss and deportation on the part of undocumented workers, even though several were campaign leaders. By the end of the drive, a schism had developed between citizens and undocumented workers in the Latino worker group. Also, a schism grew between ethnic groups representing older immigrant cohorts (Cape Verdeans) and ethnic groups representing both older and recent cohorts, like Latinos.¹⁷

What stands in the way of greater Latino participation in union life? We are afforded some insights from our cursory acquaintance with the Massachusetts experience, but also from studies that have considered this question in other regions and nationally. Past experience in areas with higher Latino populations — the Middle Atlantic, California, and the Southwest — depicts the range of issues and challenges that Latinos and labor will be facing increasingly in Massachusetts.¹⁸

Labor and Community: Two Sides of the Latino Reality

The litany of problems facing unions does not require extensive recounting here. The most obvious problem is the movement's declining base. Unionization is at a historical low point. Only 11 percent of the private sector is organized, about 17 percent of the entire labor force, including the public sector. In comparison, Germany — a high-wage, high-productivity economy — finds more than 40 percent of its workers in unions. Restructuring, capital flight, managerial resistance, and antilabor legislation have depleted labor's ranks since the late 1960s.¹⁹

There was a time when union contracts set the precedent for nonunion wages; employers settled at union wage levels to forestall union organizing. Today the relation has been inverted; union workers are forced into givebacks to bring their standard down to the nonunion sector. Weakness breeds defensiveness and caution on the part of

leadership, who tend to focus on the traditional core of craft laborers and production workers in basic industry. Labor has had minimal success in expanding into services industries or the reconfigured manufacturing sector where minorities, women, and immigrants are concentrated.²⁰

Internal practices are slow to accommodate the new workforce. The range of problematic attitudes varies from complacency to resistance founded on racism and sexism.

As with other racial/ethnic minorities, Latinos in America learn to live in different worlds simultaneously, sustaining multiple identities.²¹ Some view this as resistance to assimilation and argue that it impedes socioeconomic mobility. Others acknowledge it simply as a survival strategy, a coping mechanism, which allows outsiders to hang on to their culture as they make their way through an often hostile environment. Ethnic identity becomes a valuable resource in dealing with the atomization and competitiveness of modern U.S. society.

In either case, labor is challenged to deal with this predicament. For Latinos, the community, not the workplace, is seen as the focal site for organizing activities. Struggles over educational, health, and housing services claim their energies; the battles for political empowerment have greater mobilizing appeal. Faced with the competing demands on time and personal resources, torn between class and ethnic loyalties, minority workers have generally been less inclined to see labor as the locus of their efforts. They, too, perceive the weakness of the union movement.

For noncitizens, not to speak of undocumented workers, the community or *barrio* is a haven from that outside world where a brush with the law increases exposure to the criminal justice system. Immigrants hoping to be naturalized risk a great deal by becoming involved in a labor conflict. Many, who have fled repressive and war-torn homelands, are reluctant in their new society to associate with public institutions.

Overcoming barriers to participation, those emanating from labor as well as community, poses a test for forging alliances of a new type.²²

Reviving Labor by Linking Racial/Ethnic and Class Politics

Those of us concerned about the prospects for multiracial/multicultural coalitions see unions as an essential ingredient for engendering new movements for social change. Unions need to be revitalized, but Latinos, other minorities, and women have to refashion these institutions, making them relevant to their concerns. The stunning fact is that 80 percent of workers entering the labor market in the next ten years will be women, minorities, and immigrants.

Labor will grow only by riding the crest of this transformation. Straightforward class appeals, emphasizing economic issues alone, will fall short because they ignore the cultural chasm separating the newcomers from the dominant culture of the larger society. To attract the "outsiders," labor has to transform itself, sharing power from top to bottom. More important, it must insert itself into the life of minority communities economically and socially. And communities of color will have to reciprocate, finding ways to breathe new energy into labor, to their mutual benefit.

Fortunately, labor is becoming cognizant of this challenge, and so are labor's allies in the community domain. As we might expect, the innovative ideas and programs are originating in areas where minorities and women have greater representation, but Massachusetts is also a site of some creative problem solving. With time, changing demographics will enlarge the political space for risk taking.

In the following pages I summarize various proposals drawn from ongoing experiments locally and nationally. How does one effectively blend the economic and cultural concerns of a rapidly changing labor force? This is the common thread running through these programmatic ideas. It represents an agenda for strengthening labor through Latino infusion, but clearly, labor's renewal depends on the continuing incorporation of other minorities and women as well. First, I address the union side.

1. Hire more bilingual/bicultural organizers and staff; strengthen leadership development programs for Latinos and other minorities. There is no priority more pressing than this. Throughout the United States, as labor reflects on new and imaginative approaches to the current crisis, attention is focusing on engendering a new "organizing culture" and new models of leadership. One survey reports that, where certification campaigns have been victorious, the union adopted grassroots strategies that appealed to broader issues in addition to the bread-and-butter concerns of times past. Previously excluded groups, such as women and minorities, can be recruited by showing how unions are in the forefront of struggles around "child care, literacy, and housing, as well as . . . race and gender, affirmative action, and social justice."²³ Obviously, this advice has strong implications for the importance of organically incorporating Latinos and Latinas into the operations and leadership of unions.²⁴

In recent years the AFL-CIO, through its Organizing Institute, has intensified the recruitment of potential organizers from communities of color. And in Massachusetts, women are making inroads through innovative programs like the Women's Institute for Leadership Development. WILD, supported by the AFL-CIO, offers training for rank-and-file women and promotes an inclusive, cooperative model for cultivating labor's future leadership.

We have found that it is not enough to pay lip service to diversity or to mount the occasional sensitivity training. As unionists, we must act on our commitment to inclusion. This means rebuilding our interpersonal relationships and adopting inclusionary organizational practices. Everything counts, from the way we run our meetings to the jokes that we tell, from the pace at which we mobilize for campaigns to the language we use to describe our struggles. Without this level of consciousness, the house of labor cannot be a home to all.²⁵

2. Design creative programs and services that deal with the total social need of workers and their communities. By targeting needs in training, housing, and community economic development, unions present themselves as advocates of members, their families, and neighborhoods. For example:

a. Training programs. During the 1930s, unions functioned de facto as an antipoverty program by securing a decent standard of living for millions of assembly-line workers in basic industry. In today's economy, close to 30 percent of employed workers earn poverty wages.²⁶ For these, the escape from poverty is contingent on upgrading skill levels. Unions like AFSCME, Service Employee International Union (SEIU), 1199, and Communication Workers of America are in the forefront of training women and minority workers for the twenty-first century.

In Massachusetts, Local 285 of SEIU has operated a creative worker upgrading project designed to prepare entry-level hospital employees for technical positions. The Worker Education Program is an outgrowth of Local 285's commitment to provide career ladder opportunities for employees who have been languishing for years in dead-end jobs. The union ran a training project in coordination with management in nine hospitals across the commonwealth.

The program's success was attributable, in part, to the union's insistence that training be linked to a philosophy of lifelong education, that courses bear credit, are based in the workplace, and that instruction is offered in general education as well as technical fields. In the Boston metropolitan area, a significant proportion of participants were African-Americans, Asians, and Latinos. The Worker Education Program is an excellent example of labor's leadership role in workforce development, a crucial area for minority workers.²⁷

b. Housing. After taking a poll of members in 1988, Local 26 of the Hotel Workers Union in Boston discovered that affordable housing was deemed the top priority issue for bargaining, even ahead of wages and health benefits. Survey results showed that 98 percent of the membership was unable to purchase a median-price home, 78 percent unable to afford the rent of a median-price apartment.

Just barely averting a strike, contract negotiations led to the hotel industry's agreeing to help finance the Housing Trust Fund, contributing five cents per hour per worker. This fund assists members with housing loans and grants for security deposits for apartments and down payments and closing costs for homes.

In an effort to benefit the larger community, the Housing Trust Fund was later combined with union pension funds and public moneys to build additional housing stock that is not restricted to union members.²⁸

c. Expanding alliances for local community economic development. The Ruggles Center (Parcel 18) is a local example in Boston. This controversial negotiation to develop an area in Roxbury involves a joint venture between minority developers, the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, and Boston unions. Clouding the prospects for bringing the proposal to fruition is an important dispute over the share of jobs to be allocated to workers of color.²⁹ Notwithstanding this quandary, it is heartening to see labor as an active partner to inner-city revitalization. These initiatives need to be multiplied.

3. Help make the workplace an anchor of multiculturalism. Even with occupational segregation so prominent a feature of the U.S. labor force, Americans of different races and ethnicities probably encounter greater interaction at the workplace than in their neighborhoods. To the extent that this is true, unions are ideally positioned to merge the economic and social concerns of working people across the great divides that stratify the working population.

Through their cultural activities, publications, and political campaigns, unions can serve as a conduit for racial/ethnic unity. Organizations such as 1199, with its Bread and Roses programs, are exemplary models of a multicultural vision appropriate to the task at hand. A complementary set of community initiatives is worth considering as well.

1. Work with unions in promoting member participation. There presently exists no network of Latino unionists despite a history of activity in the Boston area. People who can work toward reviving these connections are sorely needed, and leaders and advocates within the Latino community should lend their support to such an effort, which would parallel similar activities in the areas of community organizing and political participation.

2. Work with unions around labor's agenda: (a) support labor law reform to restore balance in the power relations between employer and union, (b) amend the civil rights law to include union members as a protected class, and (c) endorse campaigns to raise the minimum wage.

3. Assist workers seeking collective bargaining. In New York City, the Chinatown garment workers campaign of the mid-1980s demonstrated that a union — in this case the ILGWU — can be instrumental in the life of a poverty-stricken enclave, especially

when it succeeds in drawing upon community resources and institutions. Some 5,000 workers, dispersed throughout hundreds of sweatshops, voted to join the union after a lengthy organizing drive that won the support of major community groups and leaders.

By most accounts, the support provided by community groups was decisive. Since the early 1970s, ethnic entrepreneurship had spurred a revival in Chinatown economic development. But by the early 1980s, many were concerned about the effect of abusive working conditions and overdevelopment on the social ecology of the community. In asserting their rights in the workplace, Asian-American workers established boundaries to unequal development.³⁰

We should expect local institutions in the Latino community — church groups, community-based organizations, advocacy networks — to facilitate the unionization of workers. This is one of the most direct and effective ways of eliminating poverty.

4. Work with unions in devising special services for nonunion community residents. In northern California, a coalition of community and labor groups called the Association for Workplace Justice offers legal advice on workplace issues, sexual harassment, and discrimination whether or not one is a union member. Some ILGWU locals throughout the country have set up “associate member” status for nonmembers interested in receiving services such as immigration counseling and ESL training.³¹ Community groups can link up with labor in these kinds of activities. In Boston, organizations like the Immigrant Workers Resource Center and the Women’s Institute for Leadership Development play a vital role in bridging labor and community.

The end of the Reagan-Bush era in 1992 inspired some optimism that working people would see an improvement in their standard of living. But those hopes seem dimmer as we approach the mid-1990s. Middle-class anxiety increases; the working class finds itself ever threatened by stagnant wages and unemployment; the poor continue mired in isolation and destitution. If there is to be a concerted political response to these conditions, labor must be part of the solution. A fundamental reordering of social and economic priorities is called for, and labor is an indispensable component of the coalition that might ensure such a transformation.

For this to occur requires thinking about more relevant meanings of the term “labor movement.” Labor must transcend the restricted notions of organized labor or unions. Not only has labor, narrowly defined, fallen short of the dynamic and progressive role it has assumed in this country’s past, it has ceased to be effective even on the delimited terrain charted in recent years: the experience with the North American Free Trade Agreement and labor law reform are evidence of this.

“Labor” must connote the vast numbers of those restructured out of their jobs during the past two decades — workers who voted for the union in failed organizing campaigns, minorities, women, immigrants, and so on. “Movement” ought to suggest a conscious plan with goals that appeal to broad sectors. In the evolution of that renewed movement, we can assume that Latino workers will be a force for social change in Massachusetts, the region, and indeed throughout the United States. 🐼

Notes

1. A brief sample of important scholarly works includes Carol Hardy-Fanta, *Latina Politics, Latino Politics: Gender, Culture and Political Participation in Boston* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993); James Jennings, “Puerto Rican Politics in Two Cities: New York and Boston,” in *Puerto Rican Politics in Urban America*, edited by James Jennings and

- Monte Rivera (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984); Miren Uriarte-Gastón, "Organizing for Survival: The Emergence of a Puerto Rican Community," Ph.D. diss., Boston University, 1988.
2. Local 1199 of the Drug, Hospital and Health Care Employees Union. The New York City-based union has a membership of 100,000. Sam Roberts, "A New Face for American Labor: Denis Rivera," *New York Times Magazine*, May 10, 1992.
 3. James R. Green and Hugh Carter Donahue, *Boston's Workers: A Labor History* (Boston: Boston Public Library, 1979); Stephan Thernstrom, *The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880-1970* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973).
 4. Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, "Hispanic Workers: Underutilized National Resource" (Washington, D.C.: AFL-CIO Publications & Materials Office, 1992), 1.
 5. *Ibid.*, 2.
 6. *Ibid.*, 4.
 7. *Ibid.*
 8. Unless otherwise noted, population and employment data in this section are drawn from Gastón Institute, "Latinos in Boston: Poverty, Income, Education, Employment and Housing" (Boston: Gastón Institute, 1994), and Gastón Institute, "Latinos in Massachusetts: Poverty, Income, Education, Employment and Housing" (Boston: Gastón Institute, 1994).
 9. Calculated from Table 1.
 10. For a case study analysis related to this subject, consult Ramón Borges-Méndez, "The Use of Latino Labor in Massachusetts Manufacturing: Evidence from Lowell, Lawrence and Holyoke," in Edwin Meléndez and Miren Uriarte, *Latino Poverty and Economic Development in Massachusetts* (Boston: Gastón Institute, 1993), 104-124.
 11. Clerical and other administrative support; services; precision production, craft, and repair; machinery operators, assemblers; laborers, handlers, and helpers.
 12. Boston Foundation, *In the Midst of Poverty: A Profile of Boston and Its Poor* (Boston: Boston Foundation, 1989), 40, 44.
 13. I wish to thank the following for information and comments: Sarah Bartlett, Françoise Carré, Edwin Meléndez, Michael Eisenscher, Tess Ewing, Cheryl Gooding, James Green, Fernando Juarbe, Kathy Kasavant, Meizhu Lui, Nelson Mercéd, Warren Pepicelli, Pat Reeve, Sylvia Saavedra-Kebler, and José Soler.
 14. Gregory De Freitas, "Unionization among Racial and Ethnic Minorities," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 46, no. 1 (January 1993): 284-301.
 15. There is a rich history of migrant farmworker organizing throughout the Middle Atlantic and New England, with Puerto Ricans and other Latinos as principal protagonists. To my knowledge, there is no scholarly research on the Massachusetts experience.
 16. Fernando Juarbe, president of Local 2334, United Automobile Workers, representing day care centers and social service agencies in eastern Massachusetts.

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