



PODER CITY GUIDE





a fresh look at

Chicago

ANOTHER INSTALLMENT IN OUR CONTINUING SERIES OF PROFILES OF U.S. METROPOLITAN AREAS. IN THIS EDITION, PODER TAKES A PEEK AT HOW HISPANICS IN CHICAGO ARE TRANSFORMING AND BEING TRANSFORMED BY THEIR CITY. UPCOMING CITY GUIDES WILL PROVIDE PORTRAITS OF HISPANICS LIVING IN AND CHANGING THE FACES OF NEW YORK, LOS ANGELES AND HOUSTON.



‘El Gallito’

CHICAGO’S TOP LATINO POLITICIAN IS THE IMMIGRANT CANDIDATE
by dan mihalopoulos.

Even though the vast majority of Hispanics in the Chicago area trace their roots to Mexico, by far the most prominent Latino politician in town is a loud and proud Puerto Rican: U.S. Rep. Luis V. Gutierrez.

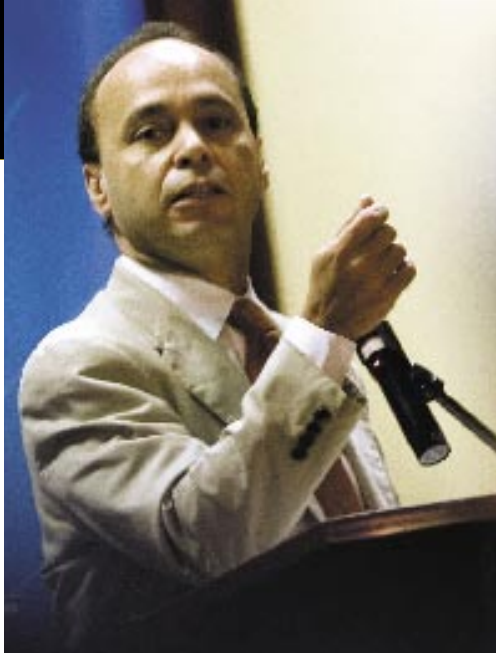
Often referred in his hometown as “Little Louie” or “El Gallito,” the pugnacious congressman owes much of his deep popularity with Mexican as well as Puerto Rican constituents to his vocal—albeit so far unsuccessful—calls for immigration reform.

Gutierrez has described Homeland Security officials as “Gestapo agents” and recently criticized his fellow Chicagoan and Democrat, President Barack Obama, for failing to live up to campaign promises to push for change in immigration laws. “Obama the President needs to stand up for what Obama the candidate and what Obama the Senator and what Obama the Chicago community organizer stood for, and lead the Congress towards reform,” Gutierrez wrote in an article published April 17 in *The Huffington Post*.

Gutierrez, 56, grew up in Lincoln Park when it was still a low-income neighborhood. “You can’t afford a cup of coffee there now, but back in the day there was nothing but bodegas and working-class people,” he says in an interview with PODER. His father worked in the steel mills before driving a cab. His mother had a soldering job in a factory.

Gutierrez was first elected to Congress in 1992 and seems well positioned to continue to serve for as long as he pleases in the 4th Illinois Congressional District, whose boundaries were drawn to create a Hispanic majority. He began his political career as a member of the Chicago City Council, where he was part of the “black-brown” coalition that backed Chicago’s first African-American mayor, Harold Washington, in the 1980s.

Gutierrez has had an on-off relationship with Mayor Richard M. Daley, who was first elected in 1989 and has dominated the local political scene for more than two decades. The congressman sharply criticized Daley in 2006, alleging that the mayor was distracted from improving schools by “less important priorities,” including his doomed pursuit of the 2016 Olympics. Gutierrez an- D



nounced plans to retire from Congress and flirted with the idea of trying to become Chicago's first *alcalde* in the 2007 election. But he eventually shied away from challenging Daley, ultimately endorsing his re-election bid, and Gutierrez changed his mind about leaving Washington. He says the battle for immigration reform is what keeps him motivated. "I want to finish this up. I feel I have a responsibility to finish comprehensive immigration reform," he tells PODER.

The congressman's ties to Puerto Rico are strong. He owns two homes in Rio Grande, according to his latest congressional disclosure report. And he was arrested in 2001 during a protest against Navy bombing on the Puerto Rican island of Vieques.

He remains hugely popular among his constituents, usually winning re-election with more than 80 percent of the vote. He has not received a primary challenge since 2004, and no Republican has filed to run against him in November.

But Gutierrez recently was the subject of unwanted media attention when a major contributor to his campaigns, businessman Calvin Boender, was convicted of bribing a Chicago council member to win support for a real estate project. Gutierrez lobbied Daley to support Boender's project, and the congressman's sister-in-law was hired to sell homes in the development, according to federal court records. Gutierrez, who also once received a \$200,000 loan from Boender, has not been charged and denies any connection between the loan and his lobbying of Daley. **C**

DAN MIHALOPOULOS IS CITY HALL BUREAU CHIEF FOR THE CHICAGO NEWS COOPERATIVE. FOUNDED IN OCTOBER 2009, THE NON-PROFIT CHICAGO NEWS COOPERATIVE (WWW.CHICAGONEWSCOOOP.ORG) PRODUCES THE CHICAGO SECTION THAT APPEARS EVERY FRIDAY AND SUNDAY IN THE MIDWEST EDITION OF THE NEW YORK TIMES. PODER EDITOR DAVID ADAMS CONTRIBUTED TO THIS REPORT.

MILLENNIUM PARK

'THE WORLD AS IT SHOULD BE'
by patty pensa.

On a windy Chicago afternoon, passersby come to Millennium Park to stop and play, sit and snack, read, or just watch. Tucked between Lake Michigan and Chicago's skyline of highrises, the popular gathering place attracts resident and tourist alike.

"It's a great meeting place," says Richard Toda, a New Yorker visiting the city for work. "You don't get overwhelmed with a lot of commercialism."

This mix of nature, art and community has become a popular respite from the hustle of city life. Conceived during the 1990s, the park opened to the public in 2004 after \$490 million in public and private money was spent to transform its 24.5 acres.

The park features the work of architect Frank Gehry, who designed its massive steel bandshell and winding pedestrian bridge. Two large public art pieces also draw crowds: the shiny *Cloud Gate*, fondly nicknamed The Bean because of its shape, and the *Crown Fountain*, made up of two facing glass towers that shoot water on squealing kids in the summertime. With giant LED screens, the towers flash video portraits of 1,000 everyday Chicagoans whose changing faces reflect those of this diverse city.

In a city where different ethnicities tend to segregate in neighborhoods, the park nurtures the easy crossing of cultures. "It's the world as it should be," says Stephen Smith, a Chicago immigration activist. Millennium Park, he says, is "one of the places where the whole city comes together."

All around, a melange of languages can be heard, from Spanish to Chinese. Against that are the chirping birds, the blaring of an ambulance and the buzz of activity, which typically centers around The Bean. A mirror to the city's skyline, the stainless steel art installation by Anish Kapoor is 66 feet long, 33 feet tall and 42 feet wide.

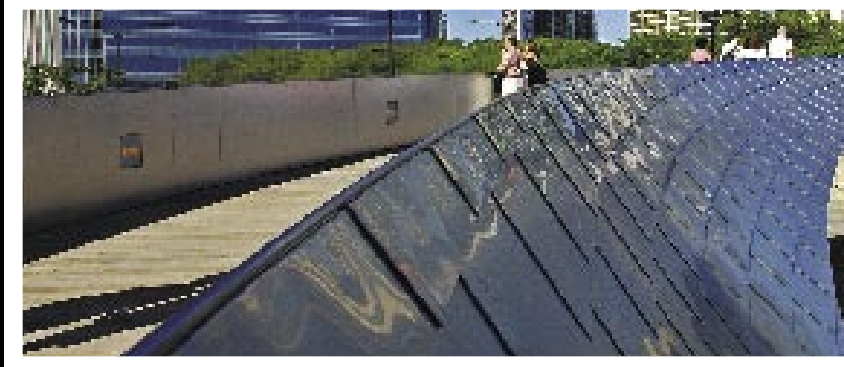
On any given day, people come to Millennium Park to walk around The Bean, and beneath it. Most linger to take pictures. Two young women from Minnesota spent a good 15 minutes photographing each other's reflection in the convex exterior. It was the first place they stopped after their seven-hour drive to the city. "The Bean is my favorite part of Chicago," Michelle Nasvik explains.

Beyond The Bean, the convergence of community and culture continues throughout the park. The Boeing Galleries is a sycamore-lined space for outdoor art exhibitions, now featuring four works of contemporary Chinese sculpture. One such work, *Windy City Dinosaur*, is an imposing representation of a red toy dinosaur.

Janis Gallo, of Chicago, visiting with relatives from California, says the public art creates much of the dynamic of the park. At night, it is performing arts that electrify the atmosphere. The offerings include theater, including Teatro Vista's recent performance of *El Nogolar*, music from classical to jazz to rock, and dance. Events are held at the Gehry-designed Jay Pritzker Pavilion and the Harris Theater, a 1,525-seat indoor center that is predominantly underground.

Millennium Park also features a 16,000-square-foot public ice rink, a cycle center with bicycle parking to encourage green modes of transportation, and the five-acre Lurie Garden with more than 138 perennial plants.

For more information about Millennium Park, go to millenniumpark.org





El Show mas Funny

CHICAGO'S SECOND CITY IS THE 'HARVARD OF HUMOR' by melissa arteaga marti.



The Second City Theater has entertained packed houses for more than 50 years. Known as the "Harvard of Humor," its graduates include a Who's Who of comedic talent, from Alan Arkin and Joan Rivers to John Belushi, Bill Murray, Mike Myers, Tina Fey and Stephen Colbert. Its fame stems in large part from the success of NBC's *Saturday Night Live*. The original cast included three Second City alumni: John Belushi, Dan Aykroyd and Gilda Radner. Since then the Chicago stage has served as a virtual comedic farm system for SNL. Second City recently branched out into Latino humor with *El Show Mas Funny*, which tackles the challenges facing the Latino community in the U.S. Second City opened in Chicago in 1959 and continues to pack its theater in Old Town. Its current revue is called *Taming of the Flu* and pokes fun at political figures like Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley and French President Nicolas Sarkozy. **C**

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The undocumented activist

A SHIFT IN THE IMMIGRANT RIGHTS MOVEMENT

by teresa puente.



Tania Unzueta spoke out as an undocumented student when she was in high school. She was a swim team captain, played the clarinet and graduated from high school with a year of college credit from Advanced Placement tests. Unzueta, now 26, is a radio journalist, a community activist, a college graduate and about to start graduate school. She still is undocumented.

She and other undocumented students have lived in limbo for years. Now as the U.S. Congress debates the DREAM Act, again, they hope that finally this year there will be a resolution for as many as one million young people who came here as minors and might qualify for legalization if they complete two years of college or military service.

Unzueta and other undocumented youth in Chicago are no longer silent or living in the shadows. They are the leading youth in the immigrant rights movement and using social media like Facebook and Twitter to get their message across and organize rallies and protests like the one held in April outside an immigration detention center in the Chicago suburbs.

"The undocumented youth are saying, 'We can represent ourselves.' This is a shift in the immigrant rights movement," says Nilda Flores-Gonzalez, a sociologist at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Unzueta and other students like Rigo Padilla were among the youth who founded the Immigrant Youth Justice League in Chicago the fall of 2009. Their goal is to provide support to undocumented youth, especially those still in high school, and to mobilize youth behind the DREAM Act and comprehensive immigration reform. "Undocumented youth have to start advocating for themselves," says Padilla, 22. His own case highlights this trend. Last year, Padilla faced deportation for driving under the influence after he rolled through a stop sign in Chicago. He had been an exemplary student and community leader

and publicly admitted he made a mistake drinking and driving. (Nobody was hurt in the incident.)

Immigrants rights groups like the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, as well as other youths and local politicians rallied to his defense over several months. Eventually, immigration authorities decided to give him a one-year stay of deportation.

Padilla's story is just one of many. Just about every week there is news of a student facing deportation. But many students are now coming out publicly, mostly using only their first names. One such young woman, Ileri, has lived in the U.S. for 16 years. "I want to study gynecology and teach, but my plans, my dreams, keep running into a wall that is this country's immigration system," Ileri said at a rally. "I am done holding myself back. I am done feeling like I have to

TEATRO LATINO, CHICAGO-STYLE

HENRY GODINEZ, A LATINO THEATRE PIONEER

by patty pensa.

When Henry Godinez came to Chicago as an actor there were few productions with Latino characters and just as few based on the Latino experience.

It was the mid-1980s, when the Latino population made up only 20 percent of a city of nearly 3 million. Today, Latinos represent almost one in three Chicago residents.

At the time, Godinez's goal was to move from Chicago to Broadway. Instead, in 1989 the Cuban-born actor, now director, helped launch Teatro Vista, a theater company dedicated to the works of Latino playwrights.

"The more I read these great plays and the more I realized that nobody was producing them, [the more inspired I was to get] in with a group of other Latino actors," he says. "We were vagabonds—as theater people we tend to be—so we went where we could."

Since then, Latino actors, playwrights and audiences have gained prominence in the city's theatrical landscape. Godinez, 51, is credited with igniting the spark that spread Latino productions throughout the city. In a 2000 *New York Times* article, Godinez was named "one of the leaders of Chicago's burgeoning Latino theater



Carlos de los Cobos

THE CHICAGO FIRE LOOKS TO A (ANOTHER) MEXICAN TO WIN IT ALL.

choose between my family and the life that I want.”

They hope their stories will help sway members of Congress and the American public. Unzueta notes that the stories of these youth are all too common. She reels off the list of questions she is commonly asked by students; “What do I do, I don’t have a driver’s license? My grandmother is dying and I can’t go visit her. How do I even get a job? Do I need to get fake papers?”

She recognizes their plight in her own background. “I see a lot of the same stories, frustrations and feelings that I went through when I was applying to school,” she says. “What drives me is to see the same stories being repeated.” **C**

TERESA PUENTE IS AN ASSISTANT JOURNALISM PROFESSOR AT COLUMBIA COLLEGE CHICAGO AND WRITES A BLOG, CHICANÍSIMA, AS WELL AS FOR LATINA VOICES.

It was a much-changed Chicago Fire soccer team that took the field last month at the start of a new season. Popular Mexican midfielder Cuauhtémoc Blanco has departed, but the team retains a Latino look.

New head coach Carlos de los Cobos, 51, played professionally in Mexico for two decades and joined the Fire after a successful run managing the national team of El Salvador. He may have no prior MLS experience and is working on his English, but de los Cobos says he’s thrilled to be in Chicago.

“Cuauhtémoc had a big impact here so I feel very comfortable. It’s a great city,” he says. Born in Matamoros, Tamaulipas, across the Rio Grande from Brownsville, de los Cobos is plenty familiar with el Norte.

His goal is to win the MLS Cup, something the Fire has been unable to do since 1998. He asks for a bit of patience while he rebuilds the team. “Nothing is easy. These things need a bit of time,” he says. He brought with him to Chicago a talented young midfielder, Julio Martinez, who played for de los Cobos on El Salvador’s national team.

De los Cobos appointment makes him one of only two Latin American coaches in MLS, a league that increasingly relies on Latino players and fans. The other, Chivas USA’s Martin Vasquez, is also about to start his first year. **C**



community.” Godinez joined the Goodman Theatre in 1996 as its resident artistic associate and launched its biennial Latino Theatre Festival in 2003.

Since his days as an actor in the 1980s, Godinez says he has seen a much richer representation of Latinos on stage and a more diverse audience at plays. But he wants larger mainstream theater companies to invest more in Latino playwrights and develop Latino audiences. Other Chicago theater companies include the all-female Teatro Luna, Agujón Theater Company, Urban Theater Company/Teatro Urbano, and the multiethnic, youth Albany Park Theater Project.

This year’s Latino Theatre festival kicks off in June with Karen Zacarias’ *The Sins of Sor Juana*, about legendary Mexican poet Juana Inés de la Cruz. Godinez is directing. Visit www.goodmantheatre.org to learn more information about the Latino Theatre Festival. **C**



BEER TOWN

CHICAGO IS NOW HOME TO MILLERCOORS
by david adams.

In the beer world it always used to be that Miller belonged to Milwaukee, and Coors was part of Colorado. But in 2008 they merged, creating, you guessed it: MillerCoors.

After creating what is now the second largest brewing company in the nation (after Anheuser-Busch) with \$7.5 billion in sales, the new joint venture made a Solomonic decision. Rather than create a headquarters in Denver or Milwaukee, it chose neither.

Instead, it chose Chicago.

"Chicago is just a great beer town," says Rick Gomez, vice president of marketing for the Coors brands of MillerCoors. "There are a lot of sports bars, and lot of neighborhood pubs, a lot of great professional teams. Chicagoans love their beer."

The city has other less liquid attractions for a big corporation. Being centrally located and having a diverse, cosmopolitan, big city reputation, MillerCoors has no problem recruiting staff for its office of 400 employees. Just in case, when the company remodeled an existing downtown office building opposite the Sears Tower it added a pub on the 16th floor with an outdoor terrace. Fred and Adolph's Pub (named after Frederick Miller and Adolph Coors) is open from

4 p.m. to 7 p.m. every day for staff to network—and enjoy the company's 35 different brands.

Besides its traditional brews, MillerCoors now markets three Latin American imports: Colombia's top beer, Aguila, as well as Cristal and Cusqueña from Peru. But its top-selling brands among U.S. Hispanics continue to be Miller Light and Coors Light. Why light? "It enables them to stay in control, and they like the refreshing crisp taste, as well," says Gomez. Beer remains "by far" the number choice of beverage for Hispanics, ahead of wine and liquor, he adds. And targeting Latinos is one of the company's biggest priorities.

The company markets heavily to Hispanics on Spanish language television and also recently signed a multi-year deal with the Division One Mexican Soccer League.

Gomez, 40, grew up in McAllen, Texas and spent some time in Chicago before going to work for Pepsi in New York. But he jumped at the chance to return to the city.

"I love running by the lake," he says. He's run the Chicago Marathon twice. After crossing the finish line he says he likes nothing better than celebrating with—you guessed it—"an ice cold Coors Light." **C**





Cool roofs

CHICAGO'S GREEN SPACE IN THE SKY

With over 7 million square feet of green roofs completed or under-way, Chicago has more green roofing than any other major U.S. city. Green roofs absorb rainfall while also having a cooling effect on the surrounding area and providing a wildlife habitat. One of Chicago's earliest green roofs is Chicago's City Hall, completed in 2001 using a lightweight soil mixture and gardens with seasonal plants. **C**



Pilsen

A CITY OF SMALL NEIGHBORHOODS
by patty pensa.



Early on a Friday night, a line has already formed inside Nuevo Leon Restaurant. It's noisy and electric as people press for position in one of the oldest Mexican restaurants in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood.

The orange, art-filled walls form a cheery backdrop as conversations in Spanish and English meld with the mouth-watering smells of the dinner menu: fajitas, enchiladas, tacos, burritos, along with heartier meals of steak, pork chops or half-chickens.

From the vantage point of Daniel Gutierrez, Jr., the popular meeting place has remained consistent even as the neighborhood has changed around it. Indeed, prices were surprisingly affordable for dinner in the city, with \$40 enough to cover food for a party of five.

"Come here today or 10 years from now and it will be the same," Gutierrez, a third-generation owner of Nuevo Leon, says of the food and pricing.

When Gutierrez's grandparents, Emeterio and Maria, left the northeastern Mexican state of Nuevo Leon for Chicago in the 1950s there were few Mexicans living in Pilsen. At the time, it was a Bohemian neighborhood populated by Eastern Europeans.

In the 1960s, Mexicans began to cluster in this near-South Side neighborhood flanking the Chicago River a few miles from downtown. They began buying homes and storefronts and establishing the area's cultural character. The Gutierrez family opened Nuevo Leon in 1962. **D**



Locals like to say that Chicago is a city of small neighborhoods surrounding the city center, each one with its own flair, such as Pilsen to the south, and Wicker Park, Ukrainian Village and Humbolt Park to the north. The city remains seg-

regated, even among Latinos. Mexicans, by far the largest Latino group, number about 560,000 (with more than one million in the greater Chicago area). Puerto Ricans are next with 102,000 residents.



Tens of thousands of Mexican-Americans live in Pilsen, where Mexican

grocery stores, bakeries, restaurants and body shops dominate. The neighborhood is peppered with brightly colored murals. And it's home to the National Museum of Mexican Art, the nation's largest institution of Latino arts and the only Latino

museum accredited by the American Association of Museums. Art has come to define the eastern section of Pilsen, where a community of about 300 artists lives and works. In the past five years, Gutierrez says, the neighborhood "has changed dramatically," becoming more diverse as more artists move in.

drawings, photography and even functional pieces made of cement. Music and drinks flowed as a crowd of mostly 20- and 30-somethings passed through the galleries. "There are certainly people of every background. Our ethnic group is 'artists,'" West says.

Gutierrez, Nuevo Leon's owner, still likes walking from his Pilsen home to the shops selling Mexican groceries and pastries. But he's noticed a lot of Mexican-Americans are moving out as property values and taxes have increased. Many are moving to small, nearby cities of Cicero and Berwyn. At the same time, he doesn't see the street gangs that used to dominate.

"Pilsen, in general, has been changing," he says, "changing for the better."

For more information about Pilsen or other Chicago neighborhoods, visit www.explorechicago.org and click on "Neighborhoods." C



The Chicago Arts District formed in 2002 to ensure that neighborhood redevelopment would not make the area too expensive for artists to live there, says Cynthia West, the group's executive director.

The arts district launched its Second Fridays Gallery Night in 2003 to welcome visitors to art galleries and artists' studios along 18th Street. April's Second Friday featured an array of art: jewelry,





Latinos in the Daley machine

HISPANICS GET A VOICE, BUT AT WHAT COST?

by dan mihalopoulos.

Despite having no experience behind the wheel of a truck, Denise Alcantar landed a high-paying job as a truck driver for the city of Chicago. Soon after getting hired in 2003, Alcantar was found to be at fault for an accident that seriously injured a co-worker she pinned between a garbage truck and a telephone pole. On the witness stand in federal court last year, Alcantar confessed she owed her job to having the right political connections—she was a dependable campaign worker for the once-vaunted Hispanic Democratic Organization.

Known in local political circles as HDO, the group dominated Latino politics in Chicago for a decade and helped solidify the near-total control of the city's Irish-American mayor, Richard M. Daley, who has held office for the past 21 years. HDO's influence only waned in the past couple years, after federal prosecutors revealed a "massive fraud" scheme in city hiring and promotions.

For more than 10 years, city officials violated federal court decrees and rigged the personnel process to favor political cronies such as Alcantar. The patronage hiring scam fueled the creation of powerful pro-Daley armies of election workers, and none was bigger and more feared than HDO, which boasted at least 500 members on the city payroll. Many members of the City Council and state legislators can thank HDO, which was founded in the early 1990s, for their election victories. Although the mayor and the group's leaders say the organization did much to empower the city's fast-growing Latino community, critics joke that the acronym HDO stands for "Hispanic Daley Organization." They say the group served primarily to perpetuate and enhance Daley's power.

Indeed, Chicago has been notorious for generations for its machine-style politics centered on Democratic party bosses. The most famous in a long line of Irish-American mayors from the city's South Side was Richard J. Daley, the father of the current mayor who ruled City Hall from 1955 until his death in 1976. The old Daley machine crumbled in the years after the boss died, leading to the 1983 election of Chicago's first black mayor, Harold Washington. He took power thanks to a "black-brown coalition" allied with liberal whites who were independent of the local Democratic machine.

But after Washington died and Richard M. Daley took office in 1989, the new Mayor Daley quickly consolidated power with the

aid of a rebuilt political machine, and Daley's Latino allies from across the city banded together to form HDO. They helped elect not only Hispanic candidates but also promoted non-Latino candidates endorsed by Daley, including Rod Blagojevich, the recently impeached Illinois governor.

HDO also deployed its members to unseat Latino incumbents who had failed to follow the mayor's commands in the City Council or state legislature, replacing them with more docile politicians. Victor Reyes, who served as a top aide in Daley's office, was the most influential HDO leader. He denied wrongdoing and was never charged, but federal prosecutors won a hiring fraud conviction last year against Al Sanchez, Daley's former Streets and Sanitation Commissioner and an HDO leader on the Southeast Side. Sanchez recently won a court ruling throwing out the conviction and ordering a new trial because prosecutors did not reveal the criminal history and gang ties of a key witness. Taking the stand in his defense, Sanchez defended HDO members, saying they backed Daley because he allowed Latinos to have a voice in his administration.

Although Daley publicly denied controlling HDO, witnesses against Sanchez described how the group was formed at the direction of the mayor's brother, William Daley, and longtime Daley political strategist Timothy Degnan. A 1993 fundraising letter that surfaced as evidence in the trial stated that HDO's "main purpose" was to re-elect Daley.

The organization's demise has sparked talk that the "new HDO" is United Neighborhood Organizations, or UNO, led by Daley ally Juan Rangel. UNO runs charter schools in the city's Hispanic neighborhoods as well as the Metropolitan Leadership Institute, a program for young Latino professionals. The mayor recently tapped program graduate Proco "Joe" Moreno to fill a City Council vacancy. But independent Latino politicians such as Jesus "Chuy" Garcia say they believe the end of HDO could usher in a new era. After falling out of favor with the mayor, Garcia lost his seat in the state legislature in 1998 to an HDO-backed challenger. Garcia stayed out of electoral politics until this year, when he mounted a successful comeback bid in the Democratic primary election in February. "We're back," Garcia said. "This has stirred interest in the more progressive-minded community to get more involved." **C**