

**CHAPTER THREE: ELYSIAN PARK CONSTITUENCY**

*Outreach to the Latino Community*

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Avenue of the Palms, Victory Memorial Grove, the U.S. Naval & Marine Corps, and the rock garden. In addition, the existing amenities like the picnic show areas, the recreation center, the lodge, and the Park trails could be included. Finally, the slide show could conclude by showing the Park users preserving the Park in a variety of ways. An emphasis could be made on their special family role in helping their community Park. For example, showing slides of how the community could get involved in an anti-graffiti campaign, a trash picking day, or a tree planting day. Reiterate that Elysian Park is not just a community Park, but a family Park.

In addition, some members of the audience will be asked to participate in role plays that deal with park preservation issues. The facilitators will be trained to engage in establishing a dialogue with the participants. Facilitators will use two methods to encourage participants: Role Playing & Domestic Tactics. A park preservation script is pre-written and two people will be asked to participate from the audience. One script topic could include additional uses for the underutilized recreation center. Another script topic could be a beautification project. The role playing will also add to the feeling of comfort among the audience and the participants.

These two group exercises are designed to simulate real life situations for the group, to aid in learning, and to provide an active role for the participants. The use of domestic tactics during the presentation provides the participants with an example of how they might inform their family members on Park preservation issues. By reinforcing the ease and effectiveness of these tactics, participants will be motivated to use them at home.<sup>17</sup> A question and answer session will follow. An evaluation of the workshop will be discussed verbally. Finally an Elysian Park literature package will be handed out. This package could include a Spanish brochure, a map of the area, and ways to preserve the Park in the "novela" format. The workshop would conclude with a sign-up sheet. Those in the audience interested in participating would sign-up for a follow-up meeting. This meeting could be the first step in inviting the Latino community to participate in preserving Elysian Park.

## CONCLUSION

It is evident from the survey that the majority of Elysian Park users are Latino. In order to incorporate their support for this Park, the Elysian Park travelling outreach workshop concept was developed. The guidelines in this chapter are only suggestions for a future forum that can reach out to Park users in the Elysian Park surrounding communities. The Latino cultural value system was discussed in order to better understand some of the inhibitions and roles that males and females play in their household. As mentioned before, these assumption do not apply to all Latinos. These traditional positions tend to apply more to recent Latino immigrants. With the workshop, it is hoped that the Latino Park users will have a better understanding and appreciation for the Park, its natural resources and its history. It is also a goal that they will develop a sense of responsibility, respect and pride concerning its conservation, and their special role in preservation. Lastly, the workshop will help Park visitors become oriented with the points of interest in the Park. With the help and support of the Latino community, Elysian Park could face the additional challenges ahead.

could revolve around cultural events or social gatherings that are commonly celebrated at the Park.

### **Relationship with Institutions**

For many Latino immigrants, authority figures create fear. Most of this fear derives from negative experiences they encountered in their native countries and from personal or family experiences in the United States. Many Latinos are hesitant to discuss any issue with any authority because of previous political experiences in their homelands. They see officials as corrupt people. It takes a long time for them to become comfortable with officials, if at all. In addition, the language barrier makes them uncomfortable addressing any issue. As a result, they are very distrustful of officials. Even though some of these agencies are trying to help Latino immigrants improve the quality of their life by obtaining family information, the lack of trust ("desconfianza") will prevent many agencies from being successful. Literature in Spanish can help establish communications between the community and an agency. In the case of Elysian Park, a Spanish brochure or a "novela" will develop rapport between the Park users and preservation agencies. In the eyes of the community, this Spanish brochure is very meaningful. It is a positive sign of cultural sensitivity to Latinos.<sup>16</sup> Building a trusting relationship between the community and the institutions needs to be nurtured and fostered in order for the community to regain trust in public officials.

### **SELECTED SITES**

Reaching all the Park users would be an impossible task. As a result, community institutions and facilities within the area could be selected as target sites for the workshop presentation. Facilities and institutions could be contacted to find out if they are interested in allocating 15 minutes of their set agenda to the Elysian Park Workshop presentation. Some of these facilities and institutions could include the local churches, schools (PTA meetings), Boys and Girls Club, Youth Centers, Amnesty Programs, Community organizations, and the Council District Office.

### **WORKSHOP CONTENT**

Since the target population for the workshop is Spanish speaking, it is highly recommended to have a bilingual workshop coordinator with a background in community outreach programs. He or she should be responsible for hiring and training the workshop facilitator. As mentioned before, the role of women and men in the Latino culture plays an important role in the household. As a result, the presentation should have a female and male bilingual facilitator. The role of the female in this case would be seen by the participants as being nontraditional. This idea serves to highlight the fact that Latinas and Latinos are capable of performing equivalent tasks and thus counteract the stereotype of the dominating Latino male. This working relationship would send a message to the females in the audience that women are capable of carrying out a different role.

### **PROCEDURE**

The presentation will consist of greetings with a brief introduction of each of the facilitator. The facilitators could try to avoid looking or acting like an authority figure. The first part of the presentation will consist of a slide show. This show will include a brief history of Elysian Park and slides of the present view sites. These sites could include Dodger Stadium, a view of the Civic Center, the Police Academy, the Buena Vista Valley and the L.A. Waterworks Reservoir, the Pasadena Freeway, the recreation center, the Portola/Fremont Gate, California's first Jewish Cemetery, Solano Street, the Chavez Ravine Arboretum, the

respect for the authority of the father.<sup>10</sup> Traditionally, many Latino wives respect and stand by the decisions of the husband. In this way the husband's patriarchy is preserved while her subservience is perpetuated. In the traditional balance of many Latino relationships, the wife is expected to provide the solace and support, receiving her compensation through the indulgence of her children and through the ultimate rewards promised by her religion.<sup>11</sup> In the United States many of these traditional roles are challenged by these women. Some Latinas have become more assimilated and aspire to progress individually through education.

On the other hand, the males in many traditional families, preserve and maintain the "macho" characteristics handed down by their father. In the Latino culture, "machismo" refers to expectations of virility, pride, authoritarianism, and prowess as well as courage, honor, respect for others and provisions for the needs of the family.<sup>12</sup> In many Latino households the male is expected to support, protect, and preserve the honor of his family. As mentioned before, the above assumptions may not necessarily apply to all Latino families. They are only generalities that have been found among many traditional immigrant Latino families. In addition to the family theme that has been mentioned above, the males' role can also play an important part in the workshop. As the head of the household, it is their personal responsibility to protect and respect the Park. These two key words (protect and respect) are highly valued among many Latino families. This theme can be translated into caring and respecting one's home. Therefore, an effective outreach workshop needs to include key words in order to be effective.

### Communication

As in all cultures, norms, values, and rules are not explicitly taught in the Latino culture. Nonverbal communication is an important means of socializing and a source of sanctions. In a culture which values manners, politeness, courtesy and honor, direct confrontation and open discussion of sensitive issues is not the norm.<sup>13</sup> The mother, in many cases is often the interpreter to the children of the father's feelings and preferences. Traditionally, family problems are kept within the family.<sup>14</sup> However, many assimilated Latino families may not agree. Reaching the head of the Latino household would be the ideal way of communicating with the Park users. However, this can be very difficult. As a result, an effective and sensitive communication strategy needs to be developed. Greeting Park users with respect and courtesy in Spanish will help establish rapport among the community. Unfortunately, a lack of written information in Spanish exists on many levels. Providing the Park literature in Spanish would set a positive precedent. This literature would help instill in the Park user a sense of appreciation for the natural and man-made resources of the Park which would reduce willful destruction and vandalism of Park property. It would also help Park users increase their knowledge and understanding of their role in the preservation of the natural environment. Lastly, this literature in Spanish would help inform the Park user on the past history of Elysian Park. In addition, the Park literature could be written in a "novela" format. Among many Latino immigrants, "novelas" or comic books are very popular. This type of literature does not use complex words. Instead, it is easy to read. The "novelas" use everyday people that work in ordinary jobs.<sup>15</sup>

In order to provide a nonthreatening, culturally sensitive environment, posters with family themes are important. These posters could be placed in the room where the workshop will be presented. The posters need to captivate Latinos from all walks of life. Some of the pictures could contain pictures of Latinos with traditional indigenous features (short stature, brown skin, and non-European features). Other posters could have a mixture of Mestizo features (half-indigenous and half Spanish, black and brown hair, brown, blue, hazel, and green eyes) and others with more Spanish features (light brown/ blond hair and fair skin). The physical diversity among Latinos requires a special sensitivity among this media package. These photos

be sensitive to Latino cultural issues that may arise directly or indirectly during the presentation. When laying out the blue print for this workshop, some of the assumptions mentioned below may not necessarily apply to everyone. They are only generalities that may be found among some traditional Latino families. The Latino Park users come from all walks of life with different experiences in their countries and in the United States. They all share a common language, a Hispanic surname, and in most cases a religion. By using these common denominators, the workshop will attempt to address the community in a relaxed, non-threatening, and non-judgmental group presentation.

### **CULTURAL VALUES AND PERCEPTIONS**

In order for the workshop to be culturally sensitive, the family value system will be examined. By analyzing these values, one can determine what issues will not be offensive to the audience and how to best engage the audience to participate in the group discussion. It is critical to choose the appropriate communication strategy for this audience in order for it to be effective. The strategy should focus on the family hierarchy, the communication patterns, gender, and the relationship between the community and the institutions.

#### **Family**

The family is central in the Latino culture. In many families an individual's behavior is a reflection of the entire family, and unmarried children are expected to live with their parents to help care for them. It has been found that in many Latino families the family is hierarchial in its structure; rules are clearly defined and sanctions unambiguous. Most of the members, if not all, contribute to the ongoing progress and stability of the family. Older children, for example, are given responsibility for the care of younger siblings. When combined with the high value placed on "respeto" (respect), the sibling attitude in the Latino family is important to the preservation of the family. Sibling rivalry and dissension are not the norm; rather, the sibling relationships take on major importance, often exceeding that of the parent-child relationship and usually continuing through life.<sup>8</sup> These assumptions are based on the practices and beliefs of many traditional immigrant Latino families and may not necessarily apply to all the Park users who may be more assimilated. However, the survey indicated that more than 70% of the Park visitors are immigrants. Many Latino immigrants living in the United States tend to hold on to their family traditions very strongly as a way to preserve their cultural identity.<sup>9</sup>

Based on the above information, the workshop could focus around the family theme. Some of the family celebrations at the Park include childrens' birthday parties, holidays, Quinceaneras, Confirmations, and Catholic First Communions. Given the Latino family's sense of unity, stability, love, respect, pride, honor, and support, it can be argued that the Park is part of the extended family. Therefore, each family member needs to contribute his/her family responsibility to the Park. In addition, the analogy can be made between the birth of a child and the planting of a tree. In many families a child's birth brings not only happiness but it also represents the continuation of the family. Similarly, the planting of a tree helps beautify the Park and the tree's roots symbolize the preservation and extension of the trees in the area.

#### **Gender**

As children mature they are increasingly socialized to the responsibilities which will be expected of them as adults. In many poor traditional immigrant families, females are educated to their tasks as homemakers and as caretakers of children. The domestic role of many females is reinforced by their duties at home and by virtue of the close mother-daughter bond and the

## **DEMOGRAPHICS**

Elysian Park represents one of many parks where the Los Angeles Latino population congregates. The number of Latinos who visit this park will continue to grow like in other park areas. According to a survey conducted by the GSAUP research team, almost 89% of the Elysian Park users are Latino.<sup>2</sup> In addition, 79% of those surveyed were born in Latin America.<sup>3</sup> It is evident from this survey that the majority of the Park users are not only Latino but they are also immigrant.

In the surrounding communities of Elysian Park, the highly Latino populated areas suggest that these residents could be frequent Park visitors. According to a study published by the UCLA Ethnic Studies Centers, 85% of the population in Echo Park, Boyle Heights, El Sereno and Lincoln Heights are of Spanish origin and 64% of these families have 5 or more members living in their household.<sup>4</sup> However, in the Highland Park-Eagle Rock area only 34% are of Spanish origin and 48% of these families have 5 or more members living in their households.<sup>5</sup> According to the survey conducted by the GSAUP research team, almost 40% of the park visitors are from Echo Park. Less than 4% are from the areas mentioned above.<sup>6</sup> The survey also shows that 25% of the park visitors are in large groups of 10-15 people.<sup>7</sup> These statistics indicate that Elysian Park users are primarily from the surrounding area and that they gather in large numbers at the Park (Refer to the Chapter on Accessibility).

Given these statistics, Latinos will continue to grow in numbers and visit this park in the 1990's. In Los Angeles, this demographic shift in population will have an impact on the social, economic, and political base. Despite the figures mentioned above, Latinos are underrepresented in the decision-making process on all levels of policy making that will affect their living conditions, their quality of life and the planning of their communities. The prosperity and preservation of Elysian Park will require including and inviting the participation of the Latino community. With an Elysian Park outreach workshop, the Latino community could be better informed on how to enjoy, understand, and respect the Park through better understanding and appreciation of its purposes and resources in maintaining its park in a beautiful state.

## **ELYSIAN PARK OUTREACH WORKSHOP**

The travelling workshop is intended as an exercise towards a longer and more complex citizen participation effort. This outreach workshop will help the Park users enjoy, understand, and respect the Park through better understanding and appreciation of its purposes and resources. It will serve to promote different Park facilities and resources through educational programs and activities. Some of these facilities include the picnic grounds, Simon's Lodge, the arboretum and the hiking trails. The underutilized and underfunded recreation center represents one of the many pressing issues that may affect the future of the Park. This workshop will also serve to inform the Park user to maximize and take advantage of the amenities that exist. In the process of informing the community, the workshop hopes to develop a sense of responsibility, pride and respect among the Park users concerning the conservation and use of the Park's natural resources. With their participation, it is also hoped that others in the community will help in the prevention and reduction of the park's willful destruction and vandalism of Park property. The workshop will also help the Park users increase their knowledge and understanding of their role in the preservation of the natural environment.

Based on the survey findings, a workshop was designed to attract the Latino Elysian Park visitors. Since it was found that the majority of Park users are Latino, this workshop needs to

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This chapter discusses a step-by-step process on developing an Elysian Park outreach travelling workshop for the Latino community. Historically, this population has been excluded in Park outreach efforts. The workshop could serve as a mechanism for contacting the community at large and informing them on the Park's history, preservation issues, and vista points. The 575 acre park provides a social outlet for many groups. The Park's natural rural landscaping and its green valleys provide a comfortable open space environment within the industrial/modern city of Los Angeles. The nearby residents of Echo Park, Elysian Heights, Chinatown, Lincoln Heights, and Boyle Heights are among its visitors. Elysian Park, like many other parks, represents an integral part of the community. With increased public awareness, the Park's constituency could participate in maintaining and preserving this land.

The Citizens Committee to Save Elysian Park is the only volunteer organization dealing with Park issues. This committee was formed in 1965 to "organize public support to preserve Elysian Park lands as public open space and to develop this environmental oasis for the recreational enjoyment of all the people of the Los Angeles region." In addition to having an organized body of constituents for Elysian Park, additional support from the present Park users could be instrumental for the challenges ahead.<sup>1</sup>

The chapter will first discuss the demographics of the Elysian Park area to determine who lives near the area and who visits the Park. Secondly, the workshop's objectives will be described. The Hispanic cultural values and their implication for an outreach program are important issues. These values need to be addressed in order to understand the fundamentals behind providing culturally sensitive information concerning Park preservation within the context of a relaxed, non-threatening, and non-judgmental workshop presentation. Preliminary workshop sites are mentioned in order to carry out this outreach project effectively. These sites were selected as key gathering places for the residents of the community. The workshop's themes are an avenue for reaching additional constituent support for the underutilized Park.



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## ENDNOTES

1. For further information contact the Citizens Committee to Save Elysian Park (213) 222-8050 or (213) 666-9651.
2. Chapter one Table one breaks down the different ethnic categories in the survey.
3. Table two Chapter one shows that park visitors from Asia, the Middle East and the United States are among the minority of Park users.
4. Ethnic Groups in Los Angeles: Quality of Life Indicators U.C.L.A. Ethnic Studies Centers 1987. This publication covers a variety of neighboring communities within the City of Los Angeles. Unlike the census, it breaks down ethnic groups into categories.
5. Ethnic Groups in Los Angeles: Quality of Life Indicators. U.C.L.A. Ethnic Studies Centers 1987.
6. Chapter 1 Table Four of the survey conducted by the GSAUP research team.
7. Table Three page 11.
8. Pavich, 1986
9. Interview with Carmen Ochoa; an Elysian Park frequent visitor. She discusses her immigrant status in the United States. Carmen mentions that she has adopted some values, but has preserved many of her traditional ones.
10. Flores, 1971
11. Penalosa, 1968
12. Mirande & Enriquez
13. Alvarez & Bean, 1976
14. Alvarez & Bean, 1976
15. The American Red Cross utilizes the "novela" as an educational tool to inform the community on AIDS. A sample of their work is provided at the end of the references.
16. Interview with Carmen Ochoa's family. She discloses her personal experiences with red tape and difficult moment she underwent because she did not know english when she first arrived. After eight years of living in the United States she feels a little less apprehensive about government agencies, but she still does not trust them.
17. Fishbein and Azjen, 1975