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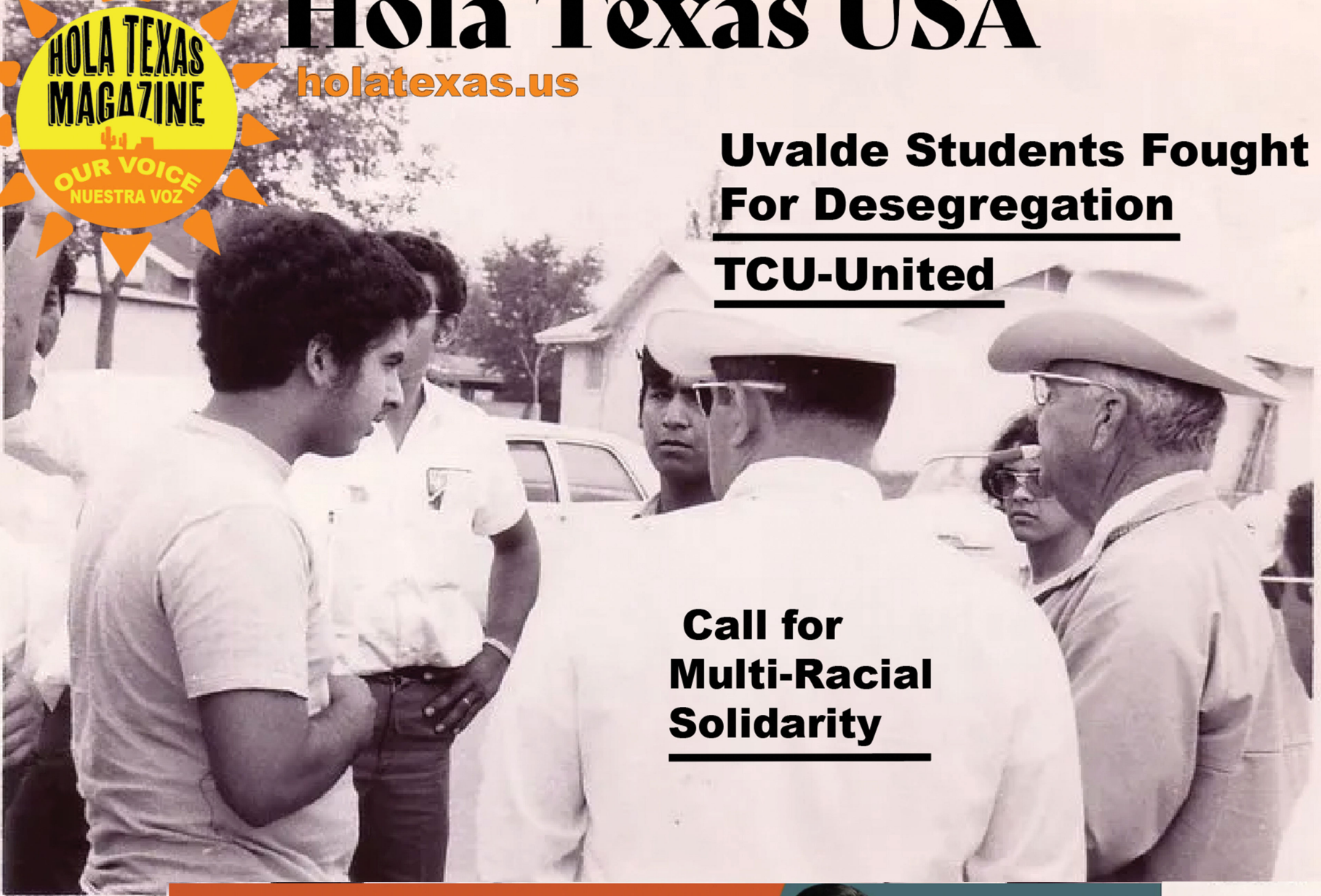
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## Uvalde Students Fought For Desegregation

### TCU-United

### Call for Multi-Racial Solidarity



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**STAFF**

**Editor in Chief**  
 Denise Govea Jimenez

**Content Manager**  
 AL Govea

**Head Writer**  
 Aaron Arguello

**Design**  
 Johnathon Arguello

**Founders Alberto Govea**  
 Felix Alvarado

For Sales and Story Ideas Contact Alberto Govea at govealberto215@yahoo.com, Call or Text 817-797-4015 Mailing Address PO Box 123706, Fort Worth, 76121

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## UVALDE STUDENTS FOUGHT FOR DESEGREGATION IN 1970S. NOW LET'S RISE UP FOR THEM



People hug as they mourn outside of Hillcrest Memorial Funeral Home in Uvalde, Texas, on May 30, 2022, during the visitation for Amerie Jo Garza, who died in the mass shooting at Robb Elementary School. CHANDAN KHANNA / AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

### By Camilo Pérez-Bustillo,

Communities of Mexican origin and others throughout the United States, in Mexico and beyond, are mobilizing in solidarity with the suffering of the community of Uvalde, Texas. This includes student walkouts at more than 200 schools on May 26 in the first wave of a renewed national movement for rational gun control measures led by survivors and families of previous mass shootings in Parkland, Florida, and elsewhere.

The horrific slaughter in Uvalde of 19 students and of two heroic teachers who died seeking to protect them should also remind us of all the ways in which children

of color have been treated as if they were expendable, and the historical roots of these oppressive conditions. The children of Robb Elementary School are our children, who are emblematic of our families and our future: *nuestro pueblo*.

The implications of the incalculable tragedy of Uvalde must also be understood within a broader historical context. Uvalde is located roughly halfway between the U.S.-Mexico border and San Antonio, Texas. More than 80 percent of the population of the school district and city of Uvalde is classified as “Hispanic” according to census data.[www](http://www)

As in much of Texas, Uvalde is a

rural, primarily working-class town of overwhelmingly Mexican descent and origin. Uvalde is thus also a border community in the broadest sense — geographically, demographically, socially, culturally and historically — with deep roots in both the U.S. and Mexico, and with many families of mixed immigration status. Much of this context has been ignored or rendered invisible by the predominant narratives promoted by commercial media, including the dilution of Uvalde’s distinctive character by categorizing its population as generically “Hispanic” or Latino/a, and by mispronouncing its name.

## Uvalde and Border Militarization and Policing

The convergent failures by local, state and federal authorities to adequately protect and rescue these children reflect deeper systemic issues related to the unequal policing and schooling of communities of color in Texas and throughout the U.S. They also highlight the urgent need to organically connect struggles and demands for the abolition of mass incarceration and the mass detention of migrants, and of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Border Patrol, with calls for an end to racist policing and the criminalization of migrants.

At the same time, efforts to glorify the belated but supposedly decisive intervention at the culminating moments of the Uvalde massacre of the Border Patrol's Tactical Unit (BORTAC) can ironically serve to underline this unit's lack of transparency and accountability. This includes the expansion of BORTAC's original mission focused on "SWAT-style raids on organized gangs smuggling immigrants or drugs across the US border" to deployments in Portland, Oregon, and potentially to Albuquerque, Chicago and New York. This was a key dimension of the Trump administration's unsuccessful plans to repress mass protests during the summer of the George Floyd uprisings in 2020.

BORTAC has also been deployed internationally to Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as several Latin American countries, as part of a broader vision that seeks to position the Border Patrol as a "marine corps of the US federal law enforcement community." All of this seeks to build on its standing, together with ICE (both within the Department of Homeland security), as the largest police force in the country, and one of the largest

in the world. Uvalde and the border region, from this perspective, are often treated as if they were occupied territory, as they were on the day of the Robb Elementary School massacre. This is reinforced by the Border Patrol's generalized, recurrent impunity in more than 200 deaths since 2010, including multiple cases of deaths in custody of migrant children and youth.

Too many of us have forgotten the central, historic role played by Mexican communities like that of Uvalde in challenging the statewide system of racial segregation and its local expressions.

Uvalde is thus representative of broader patterns, as a community that is ostentatiously policed, divided and employed by the Border Patrol, at the edge of the heavily militarized U.S-Mexico border region. Texas itself is, of course, a state indelibly marked by the continuing legacies of white supremacy through intertwined processes of Indigenous dispossession, African slavery, and the invasion, conquest and colonial settlement of Mexican territory. These are the driving forces that have produced the deep, lingering inequities that are evident in settings such as Robb Elementary School, and in broader patterns throughout Uvalde and similar school districts within the state.

The carnage at Robb Elementary School strikes deeply at our sense of vulnerability, as did the El Paso, Texas, massacre in 2019, and convergent crimes also driven by racism and white supremacy, such as the recent mass shooting in Buffalo, New York. Cases such as these highlight the persistent effects of the targeting of our communities by the human rights crimes of the Trump administration and its apologists, and more recently by the Biden administration's own abuses and inconsistencies.

For many of us committed to the struggle for immigrant justice, it has become clear

that the border is much more than the imaginary line and the increasingly divisive wall that separates the U.S. from Mexico, Latin America and the Global South. Increasingly repressive U.S. immigration policies have taught us instead that the border is an open wound that runs through every community where we are present as immigrant communities of color, and that bleeds into each of the countries and places of origin of our migrant and forcibly displaced sisters and brothers.

This landscape is concretely reflected in the intertwined neocolonial legacies of conquest and racial, cultural and linguistic subordination of people of Mexican origin. These are the traces that continue to permeate the soil and air of Uvalde, and of the border region, through the racialized control of land, labor and resources. We have also learned within this context that it is the border itself, with all its trappings and imaginaries, which generates the intricate machineries of structural violence inherent to U.S. immigration policy and its regional and global equivalents.

This includes the recurrent history of racial violence against communities of Mexican origin throughout Texas, including hundreds of lynchings, which have been reconstructed by scholars such as Marcia Muñoz Martínez and the Refusing to Forget project, as well as William D. Carrigan, Clive Webb and Nicholas Villanueva, among others. This largely suppressed history includes reports of as many as 11 cases of this kind in and around Uvalde during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The identity of the Uvalde killer as a youth of Mexican descent or origin, like 80 percent of the students in this school district, has, of course, also been seized upon by others to reaffirm our supposedly inherent, "alien dangerousness." But we should know by

now that the deadly violence unleashed in Uvalde is, in fact, deeply characteristic of the U.S. — just like the guns from the U.S. that have flooded into Mexico to nourish drug violence.

### **Uvalde and Community-Based Struggles for Educational Equality**

But Uvalde stands for much more than supposed “Latino-on-Latino” violence, or the suffering of ostensibly passive victims. One place to begin a fuller, more accurate story is with Robb Elementary School itself, and with the history of the struggle for equality in the public schools in Uvalde.

A quick glance reveals what too many of us have forgotten, regarding the central, historic role played by Mexican communities like that of Uvalde in complex, challenging struggles against the statewide system of racial segregation and its local expressions.

In Uvalde itself, 500 students led a walkout from the local schools on April 14, 1970. It became the longest boycott of its kind during [the] crucial period of Chicano activism, which laid the groundwork there for desegregation.

These are the kinds of systemic practices which led the Uvalde school district to manipulate student assignment policies so that Robb Elementary could be maintained as a segregated “Mexican school” from the time it was established in 1954, ironically the same year as the Supreme Court’s landmark decision holding that measures of this kind were unconstitutional in *Brown v. Board of Education*.

This kind of segregation was customary throughout Texas, as elsewhere in the southwest, affecting both Black and Brown students, and was only finally dismantled because of community-based struggles in places like Uvalde,

combined with targeted litigation.

In Uvalde this included activism, initially through a Mexican veterans’ branch of the American Legion, and then led by local youth focused on redressing unjust conditions in the Uvalde schools through the Mexican American Youth Organization. It was this core that constituted the leadership of the group that became known as La Raza Unida Party (LRUP), one of the most important driving forces in the national Chicano liberation movement of the 1970s.

Uvalde is only 40 miles away from Crystal City (known widely as Cristal), which became the first community in Texas to elect an LRUP majority on its school board, in 1970. It is thus not surprising that in Uvalde itself, 500 students led a walkout from the local schools that began on April 14, 1970. It became the longest boycott of its kind during this crucial period of Chicano activism. The Uvalde movement built on the lessons of the East Los Angeles, California, student walkouts in April 1968 and of the community-based boycott of the New York City public schools in February 1964, which laid the groundwork there for desegregation.

Organizer Genoveva Morales became renowned in Uvalde as a key leader of the Mexican community’s struggle against segregation and for equal educational opportunities and was the lead plaintiff on behalf of her son Roberto, in what eventually became a landmark case known as *Morales v. Shannon* decided by the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in 1975. The ruling reversed a lower court decision, and found that the Uvalde schools had to be fully desegregated, based in part on the maintenance of Robb Elementary as a separate and unequal “Mexican school.”

For almost 40 years federal judges supervised and monitored

implementation by the Uvalde school district of court-ordered remedies including desegregation, bilingual education and affirmative action measures to ensure the hiring and promotion of teachers representative of the community. Another form of symbolic reparations finally came in 2014, when a junior high school in Uvalde was named in honor of Morales.

Will Robb’s status as a “Mexican school” be remembered, as well as its 1970 walkout, when it is razed and replaced by a new building, as is apparently planned? Although they’re no longer formally segregated, the Uvalde public schools today continue to reflect the vestiges of historical discrimination against children of Mexican descent and origin, who constitute about 90 percent of the students at Robb Elementary.

According to school district data, more than 81 percent of the students at this school are eligible for a free or reduced cost lunch, while students’ test scores and overall academic progress last year were far below the state average. In the 2020-21 school year, more than 67 percent of the district’s students were considered to be at risk of dropping out. Several sources identify the reported killer as a student who was bullied because of a speech impediment, who became frustrated and eventually dropped out or was expelled.

These are the kinds of inequities in Uvalde’s schools that led to the 1970 walkout. Now things have come full circle, with the national student walkout that was held on May 26 in solidarity with the students of Uvalde. It was the students of Uvalde who stood up for us in the 1970s. Today the time has come for us to rise up for them.

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# TCU UNIFIED CLUB ARRIVE AT SPECIAL OLYMPICS (PART ONE)



*"The winner of the bronze medal in basketball is Team Texas!!!"*

*The crowd went wild. That was announced on June 11th in Orlando, Florida, at Disney World. It had been a long road coming to this point. The athletes and partners put in a lot of effort to get there, and they were going to celebrate.*

## **BY SYLVIA RODRIGUEZ, FREELANCE REPORTER HOLA TEXAS**

Team Texas is comprised of TCU Unified Club, a partnership between Special Olympics and TCU. TCU Unified club is the brainchild of Thomas Lecy, a transplant from Minnesota to Texas attending TCU. During his first year in his dorm room, Lecy created the bylaws and formed the club.

Thomas had a history of Inclusion in his hometown. He helped form a club

that represented Inclusion with Special Olympics at his high school in Minnesota.

TCU Unified has been in existence for 4 years and has touched many individuals and families with athletes 18-year-old and older with Intellectual Developmental Delays. Students, athletes, and family members met on Tuesday nights at various locations around TCU to celebrate Inclusion and the differences between everyone who makes us the same.

One afternoon months ago, Thomas Lecy and Club president Kyle Swalholm were contacted by officials from Special Olympics. TCU was being recognized as one of the National Banner Unified Champion Schools and, in turn, was given the opportunity to try out for a spot to represent Texas at the USA games in Orlando.

The TCU Unified Club would have an opportunity to compete at the National Level.

The time had come; the team tried out for basketball, having a practice filmed by Special Olympic officials. Nerves were on edge, and everyone did their absolute best. A couple of weeks later, the team was notified. TCU Unified Club was heading to Orlando to represent Team Texas in basketball! TCU Unified Club would be set to compete against some incredibly talented athletes and partners from around the United States.

The team consisted of six athletes Thomas, Danny, Avant, Johnathan, Logan DeAndre, four partners, Will, Bennett, Charlie, Andrew, and two coaches, Thomas and Kyle. The team was ecstatic.

Once the excitement slowed down, fundraising began. Beta Theta Pi fraternity and Delta Gamma joined forces and created a night where the unified team played a full game of basketball at TCU's Schollmaier Arena. The fundraiser helped

raise funds to go to Orlando by selling tickets to the game and T-shirt sales. Each one of the athletes was supposed to raise \$1200.00. With the help of Beta Theta Pi and Delta Gamma, the team did not have to do any more fundraising.

For the athletes and partners competing at Disney, it would be a dream come true. To make all this happen, various details had to be worked out, flights had to be booked, and hotels had to be secured. Athletes, Partners, and families gathered excitedly to hear the latest announcements about the trip in June.

Then it seemed like in an instant, it was time for everyone to pack, load their cars, and head to the airport. Team Texas (TCU Unified) would fly together in unity, just like all those Tuesday and Thursday practices. The team was ready, as much of the anxiety and anticipation had also been addressed during Spring practice sessions. They were prepared to represent Team Texas both physically and mentally.

It was finally June 6th, the day of the first preliminary basketball game against Florida. The team entered the basketball court full of optimism, pumped to play, and great sportsmanship.

The score of that was 30-24. Florida took the preliminary game. There would be two more challengers that would be set to compete against TCU Unified.

Thomas Parks, the veteran athlete of TCU Unified Club, said, "My level of excitement playing against Florida was the coolest thing I ever experienced. Playing against other teams from different states was a dream come true. For many of the teams' partners and athletes alike, this signified the togetherness, the Inclusion, the growing and learning together that can only be described as TCU Unified Club.

## Entertainment News We Name Our Kids E Mas



### Alonzo

On the new Netflix comedy special Cristela says "I grew up in the hood and sometimes (Paraphrasing) we name our kids for things

we want like Mercedes, Paid water bill, wheres' cable has anybody seen cable"

Cristela makes fun of her upbringing in San Juan Texas from childhood to college and there is something there for all of us to relate to. The special begins with her driving to the show with none other than Dolores Huerta riding shotgun. And in a visual version of name drop you have Julian Castro introduce her at event. This combination made me curious, so I want to see Porque (Why)

You see as funny as Cristela is she also has a social conscience that has led her to activism for Raza cases. She credits the legendary Dolores Huerta and poet Sonia Salez as her mentors for this. And as for Julian Castro she volunteered to work in his 2016 presidential run. That said if politics gives you tired head or makes you roll your eyes, don't' worry her show is not about that.

Pero (But) she does touch on Zombies/ COVID E a lot more that had me laughing from start to finish. So, if you want a laugh with a Mexican flavor this is for you.

### The Gordita Chronicles

Want more laughs, check out the G. C. on HBO Max which just premiered on June the 23rd. The show focuses on the family of Victor Castelli (Juan Javier Caredenas) as the father that immigrates to Miami from the Dominican Republic. The timeline is sometime in the 80s when the family

arrives full of hope and ready to achieve the American Dream. The cast consists of Dad Victor, mom Adela (Diana Maria Riva) and two daughters Emilia (Savannah Nicole Ruiz) and the star of the show the younger sister Cucu "Gordita Castelli" played by Olive Goncalves.

The family soon discovers that what they imagined life would be in America is not the reality at least not now. Whether it is the father who is a marketing executive repeatedly being addressed by his boss with name of the janitor. And the girls in school realize that maybe not all the kids care for them and the word "Gordita" is not a term of endearment in this new setting. This show is well done and for the most part is safe for all audiences.

Finally, the Raza responsible for this show does not end with the actors Tambain (Also) you have Eva Longoria and Zoe Saldana as Executive Producers.



### Father of the Bride

Yes, that one but this time with a Latino twist starring Andy Garcia and Gloria Estefan. If you liked the others, you'll like this one with a Cuban and Mexican twist.



### The Lincoln Lawyer

Now if you need a break from laughing but not had enough of Raza in lead roles. Manuel Garcia-Rulfo stars as Mickey Haller a Los Angeles lawyer with Mexican roots. Mickey takes all cases large and small, but has a big murder case that he inherited

from an associate that series revolves around. The Drama series is on Netflix and runs 10 episodes that keep you engaged through all episodes. This one is not for the whole family, recommended for mature audiences. But if you like crime dramas this one is a good plus has a Raza in the starring role.

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# Hola Español

Padres Y Niños En Crisis De Salud Mental Deben Saber Que La Recuperación Es Posible

La Alianza Nacional sobre Enfermedades Mentales (NAMI) comparte la experiencia vivida

Por Jenny Manrique, Servicios de Medios Étnicos

Miami, Florida. – Estephania Plascencia luchó contra la depresión crónica y la ansiedad desde que estaba en la escuela primaria hasta mediados de los 20, cuando finalmente buscó ayuda. Los ataques de ansiedad se habían vuelto tan frecuentes que apenas se levantaba de la cama. Un amigo la convenció de ver a un terapeuta y comenzó a aprender estrategias saludables para lidiar con el dolor junto a la toma de medicamentos.

Hoy, Plascencia es la Coordinadora del Programa Juvenil en el capítulo de Miami-Dade de la Alianza Nacional para las Enfermedades Mentales (NAMI, por sus siglas en inglés), una organización de pares que ofrece clases de educación gratuitas y grupos de apoyo para personas con afecciones de salud mental y para sus familiares.

“NAMI me ayudó a darme cuenta de que no estaba sola. Se convirtieron en mi red de apoyo y mi familia... Me brindaron la validación y la comprensión que me permitieron trabajar con otras personas en sus procesos de recuperación”.

Plascencia habló en una conferencia de prensa virtual organizada por el capítulo de Miami-Dade de NAMI como parte de una campaña de un mes para crear conciencia sobre el aumento nacional de enfermedades mentales entre niños y jóvenes, declarado emergencia nacional por la Asociación Estadounidense de Pediatría.

Tras hablar ante auditorios repletos de estudiantes de secundaria y preparatoria, descubrió que compartir su historia “es la herramienta más poderosa para luchar contra el estigma” que acompaña a las enfermedades mentales.

Los niños pospandemia son curiosos, dijo Plascencia. “Con frecuencia preguntan cómo encontrar ayuda mental cuando los padres no les creen y malinterpretan sus síntomas como pereza o los regañan por faltar a la escuela o no encontrar trabajo”.

Eddy Molin, enfermero psiquiátrico del Jackson Health System Miami, dice que ve que “los padres son duros con sus hijos para lograr el éxito, pero no reconocen si están experimentando una crisis”.

En los últimos dos meses, Molin ha notado un aumento en las admisiones de niños con ansiedad y comportamiento disruptivo. Él cree que los tiroteos masivos, especialmente aquellos en entornos escolares, han inquietado a los niños que ya luchan contra el aislamiento.

Animó a los padres a ser “compasivos y empáticos”, a prestar atención a síntomas como “la abstinencia, la disminución de la higiene personal, más tiempo en la cama y la desconexión con la vida, incluso con las cosas que solían amar, como jugar videojuegos”.

“Cuando tienes un sistema de apoyo que está ahí para ti, la recuperación es posible”, enfatizó Molin. “A veces es importante tomar medicamentos, pero a veces eso también puede ser agotador. Muestra amor. El amor es la clave”.

Joshua Ho aprendió este consejo de la manera más difícil. Durante 14 años trabajó seis días a la semana como decano de disciplina en una escuela secundaria en North Miami. Estaba acostumbrado a cuidar de sus alumnos inmigrantes que enfrentaban “incidentes trágicos” en sus familias o países de origen. “Pensé que sabía de qué se trataba la salud mental”, dijo Ho, un inmigrante de Corea que hoy es el Director de Programas de la Junta Asesora Asiático-Americana del Condado de Miami-Dade.

Pero no se dio cuenta que su hijo mayor estaba luchando. Cuando este comenzó a tener dolores de estómago, dolores de cabeza, falta de energía y una necesidad constante de dormir, Ho se enojó. “Como padre asiático típico, mis expectativas para mi hijo eran muy altas... ¿Por qué no está haciendo lo que se supone que debe hacer?” Ho recuerda.

Envió a su hijo a un pastor de jóvenes de la iglesia e hizo una cita con un acupunturista. Nada funcionó. Finalmente, su hijo habló con un consejero y Ho se enteró de que padecía una enfermedad mental. Ahora de 20 años, su hijo está en el camino de la recuperación.

“No hay ningún libro sobre cómo ser un buen padre”, dijo Ho. “Pero gritar no ayuda. Conversar sí”.

Para Susan Racher, presidenta de la junta de NAMI Miami-Dade, “Tenemos que comenzar con la educación: saber que tienen derecho a obtener ayuda y saber dónde encontrar atención médica”.

Esto inspiró la campaña de educación de NAMI de un mes de duración que ha incluido eventos públicos, talleres, publicidad, y vallas publicitarias. “Las condiciones de salud mental son más comunes que cualquier otra, pero desafortunadamente, la atención y la alfabetización en salud mental son difíciles de alcanzar en muchas comunidades”, dijo.

Los datos oficiales muestran que uno de cada seis jóvenes tiene diagnósticos actuales de trastorno por déficit de atención con hiperactividad, ansiedad, problemas de conducta o depresión, pero solo la mitad recibió tratamiento de salud mental el año anterior.

Beth Jarosz, directora interina de KidsData en el Population Reference Bureau, señaló que la tasa de suicidios en EE. UU. entre los jóvenes de 15 a 19 años es casi un 60% más alta en 2020 que en 2007.

Más preocupante, dijo, es que en Florida, la tasa de suicidio de niños de 10 a 14 años en 2020 es más del triple de la tasa de 2007. Por el contrario, las tasas en California están congeladas en alrededor del 33% y las tasas en Nueva York apenas cambiaron.

“Aunque las tasas de suicidio juvenil son más altas entre los blancos y los estadounidenses asiáticos e isleños del Pacífico, las tasas de jóvenes negros están aumentando rápidamente”, dijo. “Se han duplicado en las últimas dos décadas”.

Jarosz dijo que los grupos con mayor riesgo de trastornos de salud mental son los jóvenes indígenas, los jóvenes que enfrentan una experiencia infantil adversa como el suicidio o problemas de abuso de sustancias en su familia, los jóvenes LGBTQ y los jóvenes que no tienen hogar o están en el sistema de cuidado de crianza.

De su camino hacia la recuperación, Plascencia aprendió que las enfermedades mentales son tratables y ese es el mensaje principal que quiere enfatizar. “Hay ayuda y definitivamente no tienes que soportarlo solo”.



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# Parents And Children in Mental Health Crises Need To Know – Recovery Is Possible

## National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) shares lived experience

**By Jenny Manrique,  
Ethnic Media Services**

Miami, Fl. – Estephania Plascencia struggled with chronic depression and anxiety from when she was in grade school until her mid-20s when she finally sought help. The anxiety attacks had become so frequent, she hardly left her bed. A friend convinced her to see a therapist and she started learning healthy coping strategies and taking medication.

Today, Plascencia is the Youth Program Coordinator at the Miami-Dade chapter of the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI), a peer based organization of people with lived experience that offers free education classes and support groups for individuals with mental health conditions and their family members.

“NAMI helped me realize I was not alone. They became part of my support network and family...They provided the validation and understanding that allowed me to work with other people in their recovery journeys.”

Plascencia spoke at a virtual news briefing hosted by the NAMI’s Miami-Dade chapter as part of a month-long campaign to raise awareness of the nationwide increase in mental illness among children and youth – declared a national emergency by the American Pediatrics Association. She speaks to packed auditoriums of middle and high school students and has found that sharing her story “is the strongest tool to fight against the stigma” that attaches to mental illness.

Post-pandemic kids are curious, Plascencia said. “Frequently they ask how to find mental help when parents don’t believe them and misread their symptoms as laziness or scold them for missing school or not finding a job.”

Eddy Molin, a psychiatric nurse at the Jackson Health System Miami, says he sees “parents being tough on their kids aiming for their success, but not acknowledging that they are experiencing a crisis.”

Over the last two months, Molin has noticed a rise in admissions among

children with anxiety and disruptive behavior. He believes the mass shootings – especially those at school settings – have unsettled kids already struggling with isolation. He encouraged parents to be “compassionate and empathetic, to pay attention to symptoms such as withdrawal, a decline in personal hygiene, longer times in bed and disengagement from life, even with the things they used to love such as playing video games.”

“When you have a support system that is there for you, recovery is attainable,” Molin stressed. “Sometimes it’s important to be on medication, but sometimes that may be tiring, too. Show love. Love is the key.”

Joshua Ho learned this advice the hard way. For 14 years he worked six days a week as a dean of discipline at a middle school in North Miami. He was used to taking care of his immigrant students who faced “tragic incidents” within their families or countries of origin. “I thought I knew what mental health was about,” said Ho, an immigrant from Korea who today is the Program Director for Miami-Dade County Asian American Advisory Board.

But he was oblivious to the fact that his eldest son was struggling. When the son began having stomach aches, headaches, lack of energy and a constant need to sleep, Ho became angry. “As a typical Asian parent, my expectations for my son were very high...Why isn’t he doing what he’s supposed to do?” Ho recalls.

He sent his son to a church youth pastor and made an appointment with an acupuncturist, nothing worked. Finally, his son talked with a counselor and Ho learned he was suffering from mental illness. Now 20, his son is on the path of recovery.

“There is no book about how to be a right parent,” Ho said. “But yelling and screaming doesn’t help. Conversation does.”

For Susan Racher, Board President of NAMI Miami-Dade, “We have to start with education – knowing that you have a right to get help and knowing where to find health.” That’s what inspired NAMI’s monthlong public education campaign that has included public events, workshops, advertising, billboards. “Mental health conditions are more common than any other but unfortunately, care and mental health literacy are elusive in many communities,” she said.

Official data show that one in six youth have current diagnoses of Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, anxiety, behavior problems or depression, but only half received mental health treatment in the prior year.

Beth Jarosz, Acting Director for KidsData at the Population Reference Bureau, noted that the US suicide rate for 15-to-19-year-olds is nearly 60% higher in 2020 than it was in 2007. More worrying, she said, is that in Florida the suicide rate for 10-to-14-year-olds in 2020 is more than triple the rate in 2007. By contrast, rates in California are frozen at about 33% and rates in New York barely changed.

“Even though youth suicide rates are highest for whites and Asian and Pacific Islander Americans, rates for black youth are rising fast,” she said. “They have doubled in the past two decades.”

Jarosz said that the groups most at risk for mental health disorders are indigenous youth, youth who face an adverse childhood experience like suicide or substance abuse problems in their family, LGBTQ youth, and youth who experience homelessness or are in the foster care system.

From her path to recovery, Plascencia learned that mental illnesses are treatable and that’s the main message she wants to stress. “There’s help and definitely you don’t have to bear it alone.”



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# ASIAN AMERICANS CALL FOR MULTI-RACIAL SOLIDARITY AT FIRST-EVER UNITY MARCH

By **SUNITA SOHRABJI/EMS**  
Associate Editor

WASHINGTON DC — Approximately 15,000 people gathered June 25 at the National Mall here for the first-ever Unity March, organized to draw attention to the dramatic spike in hate crimes against the Asian American Pacific Islander Community.

The enthusiastic young crowds gathered against the backdrop of the Capitol Building in the sweltering humidity of a mid-summer day in DC. Harking the Supreme Court decision a day earlier, many men and women carried handmade signs equating reproductive rights with civil rights for the AAPI community. Others had added handwritten statements about reproductive freedom to pre-printed signs.

The overarching theme of the rally — echoed by many of the speakers onstage — was the hope that what Americans share in common is greater than what divides us. More than 40 organizations, representing the full spectrum of AAPI subethnicities, arranged the noon event, led by APIAVote and Asian Americans Advancing Justice.

MSNBC news anchor Richard Liu moderated a portion of the four-

hour event, which can be watched here in its entirety.

Over the past three years, the Web portal Stop AAPI Hate has recorded more than 11,000 incidents of verbal harassment, physical violence, and bullying targeting AAPI persons. More than two-thirds of the attacks are against women.

The afternoon put many human faces to the statistics of anti-Asian hate crimes. Several speakers were themselves victims of hate crimes or had lost family members to attacks motivated by hatred.

“White supremacy has taken hold of our American lives. Asian Americans are fighting for our God-given rights just to simply exist,” said the Reverend Yena Hwang, one of the few ordained female Korean ministers to serve in the Presbyterian Church.

Filmmaker Pardeep Kaleka recalled the morning of Aug. 5, 2012, when avowed white supremacist Wade Michael Page stormed the Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, as Sunday morning prayers were being held. Page killed six people, including temple founder Satwant Singh Kaleka, Pardeep’s father.

Satwant Singh Kaleka confronted

Page during the massacre and tried to prevent him from going to the kitchen, where women were preparing the daily feast known as langar.

“My dad’s final words were a prayer: he did not pray for himself. He prayed for all of us,” said Kaleka.

New York City resident Esther Lee was verbally abused and spit upon when she refused to engage in a fist bump with a man, while she rode the subway. Her attacker called her “a miserable, f\*\*king carrier,” a charge often leveled at the Asian American community since the pandemic began. None of the other subway passengers stepped in to help Lee. “It was 57 seconds of pure terror,” she said.

Lee went straight to the police station to file a report but was told her case was not a hate crime. Police told her she should not have filmed the incident and blamed her for triggering her attacker.

Robbyn Lewis, a member of the Maryland House of Delegates, interrupted a hate crime as it was occurring at Washington DC’s Union Station. An Asian woman was being harassed by a man on a bicycle. “I was born in Maryland,” shouted the woman, as the aggressor escalated his taunts.

"I had to do something," said Lewis. "I was afraid, but how could I not?" She confronted the aggressor, who turned his venom on her, calling her a "bi\*\*h" and other foul names.

"I put my body between the woman and that man," said Lewis. "As he circled, I circled too. I had this terrible feeling that he was going to raise his hand and strike her." As he left, the man spit in Lewis' face. The politician called police: spitting at someone is a felony. Federal prosecutors are working to identify the incident as a hate crime. "I think about this and how many times women experience harassment, and they are completely alone," said Lewis.

Gareth and Fe Hall shared the tragedy of their only child, Christian, who was killed by police at the age of 19. The Halls adopted Christian from China when he was just a year old. "He totally embraced every race around him.

He told people he was a Black, Filipino, Chinese American," said Gareth Hall, who is Black. Christian had dreams of becoming a rap star.

But the young man struggled with his mental health, joining his peers in what is often referred to as the shadow pandemic of youth mental health crises. On Dec. 30, 2020, Christian experienced a serious bout of suicidal ideation. His parents called 911. Pennsylvania troopers fatally shot Christian, justifying their actions by stating that Christian was carrying a weapon.

"The very people that were supposed to protect my son killed him instead," said Fe Hall, who is Filipina.

Komal Chohan paid tribute to her grandmother, Amarjeet Kaur Johal, who was one of nine people killed as 19-year-old Brandon Scott Hole opened fire at a FedEx Ground facility in Indianapolis, Indiana on April 15, 2021. Four of Hole's victims were Sikhs.

"This was a wake-up call to me: that we had to take the fight into our own hands," said Chohan, noting that she and other 20-somethings organized to fight back against hate. "We were feeling unsafe in the place we called home, a fear many Asian Americans have had to face, and we feel that no one is listening."

Many of the speakers referred to pioneering activist Helen Zia, who co-founded American Citizens for Justice shortly after Detroit, Michigan auto factory worker Vincent Chin was beaten to death with a baseball bat by two white men. Zia spoke briefly at the march, via video.

"We march here where so many have marched before in the struggle for justice. For too long, our communities have been pitted against each other, fighting for the crumbs that are thrown our way," said Zia.



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