

Report on the 2016 NEA Hispanic Issues Conference

June 17 – June 19, 2016

Doubletree by Hilton, Fort Lee, NJ

The 23rd Annual NEA Hispanic Caucus Leadership Conference (as stated on the printed brochure) had the theme of: “Organize, Educate, and Lead: Mobilizing Our Communities for a Better Tomorrow.”

There were five Breakout Sessions offered, two running concurrently in the first morning session and three running concurrently in the second morning session:

1. Political and Legislative Update: Organizing Our Communities for a Better Tomorrow
2. Activism and Advocacy in at Risk Communities
3. Engaging Our Dreamers: MCOP Grants, Resources, Daca/Dapa Updates
4. Long-Term English Learners: Information, Guidance and Advocacy for Educators who are Committed to Ensuring Educational Access and Opportunity for English Language Learners
5. Using Media to Organize the Hispanic Community

I attended sessions #1 and #5.

Session #1 was mostly as the title implies: a recap of action currently being taken by NEA in advocating for immigration reform. I found the focus was mainly on issues pertinent to K-12 and, sadly, I didn't learn anything new, except information about some websites that might be of interest:

www.educationbooks.org

www.mynea360.org

StrongPublicSchools.org

VotoLatino.org

The second session I attended was #5: Using Media to Organize the Hispanic Community. The person who presented the session did not seem very prepared to PRESENT, but more inclined to ask the audience what they used for social media. I did learn about the following website that should be online by the RA:

NEAedjustice.org – a new social justice hub

I was rather disappointed with the offerings. I voiced my concerns (gently, of course) to Gladys Marquez, the Chair of the NEA Hispanic Caucus. I suggested to Gladys that, perhaps, there should be a “widening of the scope” of the presentations with an effort to instruct/educate our members on our

past and its relevance to our present. Yes, I suggested, and Gladys was extremely open, to offering sessions that addressed the History of the Chicano and Mexican/American movements in the U.S.

I met a former NEA director from Florida who stated he had attended every single NEA Hispanic Issues Conference. He said, in the past, there were at least 150 – 200 attendees at every conference. I must sadly report, there were, maybe, 50 -75 in attendance at this conference, including Lily Eskelson-Garcia, Princess Moss, Kevin Gilbert, George Sheridan, and Earl Wiman who were present for all/some of the conference.

Something needs to be done to draw a larger number of participants and I believe that something is offering more opportunities to learn, instead of simply addressing current issues.

Respectfully submitted,

Dorothy M. Reina