

Somos TeaCanos...

The Growth of Hispanics Within the Tea Party Movement

By: Veronica L. Vera

The mainstream media has promoted a narrative creating the perception that there is a shortage of Hispanics in the Tea Party, but you may be surprised by the reality of Hispanic involvement in this grassroots movement.

In good 'ol Illinois, the pride and joy of the Democrat Party, the Tea Party is alive and well, and making its mark in the Hispanic community. Hispanic Tea Partiers in Illinois, identifying themselves as "*TeaCanos*", are popping up around the state and declaring their support of smaller government and freer markets; their defense of individual freedoms; and their advocacy of personal responsibility.

In fact, Hispanics have quite a bit in common with Tea Partiers. According to a September 2011 poll conducted by Resurgent Republic and the Hispanic Leadership Network, the economy and jobs dominate the issue landscape for Hispanics, even as it does for Tea Partiers. In the swing states of Florida, Colorado, and New Mexico, for example, 72%, 69%, and 60% of Hispanics respectively say that these issues are most important. Additionally, conservative Hispanics in Florida and Colorado believe the best way to increase job opportunities for Hispanics is to "rein in government spending, lower taxes, and reduce excessive regulations," compared to "increase government investments in job training, education, and infrastructure" (52-42% in Florida, 51-42% in Colorado)(1).

Sound eerily familiar? It should. It echoes the reason for the very existence of the Tea Party. The Tea Party movement was conceived in response to the massive debt incurred by irresponsible politicians in Washington, DC. People immigrate to this country from around the world for the opportunities and freedom that America offers – opportunities placed in danger by a massive loss of jobs, over-regulation of businesses, and exorbitant taxation of job creators. The goal of the Tea Party is to restore the liberties enjoyed by entrepreneurs and, once again, cultivate an environment for them to create wealth and jobs. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Hispanics owned 2.3 million non-farm U.S. businesses operating in the fifty states and the District of Columbia in 2007, an increase of **43.7%** from 2002. These Hispanic-owned firms accounted for 8.3% of all non-farm businesses in the United States, 1.6% of total employment and 1.1% of total receipts (2).

But remember those pesky accusations of the Tea Party being a racist or xenophobic movement? Well, you might be surprised to learn that a Gallup poll found that the Tea Party is

made up, by and large, of the same percentage of various racial groups that make up the general population. Specifically, the poll found the make-up of Tea Party supporters to be 79% non-Hispanic white; 6% non-Hispanic black; and 15% other; while the make-up of the U.S. Population is reported to be 75% non-Hispanic white; 11% non-Hispanic black; and 15% other (3). Those numbers sound remarkably consistent.

Yvonne Sencial Bolton is a self-described *TeaCana* and an immigrant from Guatemala. She considers her involvement in the Tea Party movement to be both an investment in the future of our country and an investment in lives of her children and grandchildren: “Right now, our kids are being born with a mountain of debt and our government continues to spend away our taxpayer money on programs that aren’t working. The spending is out of control and something needs to be done about it.”

Later this month, the Chicago Tea Party Patriots will co-host their first conference in Schaumburg, IL – TeaCon Midwest 2011 – which will include such notable Tea Partiers as Glenn Beck, Andrew Breitbart, and Dana Loesch. Jasmine Velasco Hauser, a ticket-holder to the 2-day conference and enthusiastic *TeaCana*, is looking forward to participating in the various breakout sessions the conference will offer. “I think that if we’re ever going to get this country back on the right track fiscally, the Tea Party is the vehicle that will bring us there. This conference gives us a chance to come together and strengthen our message to our elected officials in DC – put an end to the irresponsible spending,” says Hauser.

Steve Stevlic, organizer of the Chicago Tea Party Patriots, is excited about the conference, but also about the increased participation of Hispanics he’s noticed in the Tea Party; “The Hispanic community is made up of hard-working, entrepreneurial, principled people that exemplify everything the Tea Party stands for. It’s unfortunate that politicians on both sides have exploited this group of people for so long. It’s time we let Hispanics know that they have a place, a home, in the Tea Party.”

I am a Hispanic American, and I am a Tea Partier. I believe in smaller government and lower taxes. I support the Constitution of the United States. I believe in the power of capitalism and free markets. Yes, I am a Hispanic American, *y soy TeaCana*...

(1) 1200 interviews conducted with Hispanic voters in three swing states – Florida, Colorado, and New Mexico – during September 6-10, 2011

(2) <http://www.census.gov/econ/sbo/get07sof.html?11>

(3) <http://www.gallup.com/poll/127181/Tea-Partiers-Fai...y-Mainstream-Demographics.aspx>