



**American GI Forum of the United States  
1948 - 2021**

# **2021 Mid-Year Conference**

*"Veterans, Women & Youth Working Together for a Better Tomorrow"*



**APRIL 22 - 24, 2021**  
**San Antonio, Texas**



*"Education is our Freedom and Freedom Should be Everybody's Business"*



Lawrence Romo  
National Commander

## American GI Forum of the United States

*A Veterans Family Organization Since 1948 Chartered by Congress 1990*  
National Office

635 W. Corona Ave, Suite 114 • Pueblo, CO 81004

(719) 299-4838/4839

Founded  
March 26,  
1948

Dear American GI Forum of the US Members,

April 22, 2021

I want to extend my sincere appreciation for attending the 2021 American GI Forum of the US National Mid-Year Conference. Our conference theme is "A TIME TO HEAL AND THE FUTURE IS NOW." Veterans Forum, Women Forum, and Youth Forum are an integral part of our organization. With your attendance we can work together to enhance the wellness of our organization and the wellness of our military, veterans, civil rights, equal rights and educational access. Working together we can definitely achieve more.

It has been my honor to serve as the National Commander. We have had a very challenging year with the COVID-19 pandemic effecting our lives and have lost wonderful AGIF US leaders before their time succumbing to the pandemic. May our friends and fellow veteran advocates Rest in Peace! All of you are to be saluted for your involvement and the work you do such as giving college scholarships to deserving students, giving Christmas presents to needy children, presenting honors to the fallen veterans or at local ceremonies, and numerous other activities.

We have emphasized optimal communication, effective teamwork and for each one of us to stand for ethical, accountable and transparent behavior. Our National Board of Directors Virtual Zoom Meetings have been a very enjoyable process to resolve issues and get our business accomplished.

We are making a difference in numerous legislative issues and we must continue to be a strong force and voice to make a positive difference in the lives of our military, veterans and family members, civil rights, equal rights and educational access. I have visited during the pandemic via zoom with some of the congressional leaders and their staffs to promote the AGIFUS and discuss our positions on the current issues. Working on the Deported Veterans issue, facilitating getting Private Marcelino Serna posthumously the Medal of Honor and getting Fort Hood renamed after Master Sergeant Roy Benavidez are just a few items we are working. We also work closely with the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda, the Hispanic Association on Corporate Responsibility, SER Jobs for Progress, National Immigration Forum, the Deported Veterans Support House, Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund and other organizations. You do outstanding work at the local level and also bringing up issues at the National Level we should be working on.

Let's continue moving forward! May God Bless you, our military, veterans, family members, the American GI Forum of the US!

Sincerely,

Lawrence Guzman Romo  
National Commander



Welcome to the 2021 American GI Forum Annual Mid-Year Conference! I thank you for attending the 1<sup>st</sup> virtual conference. 2020 is a year we all would like to forget. The COVID-19 Pandemic put a twist in all of our lives along with the unexpected weather. Both have affected many families, from loss of jobs to not having food, heat, and water. The American GI Forum national, state, and local chapters have provided money or volunteer support to help our communities in need.

The American GI Forum continues to bring attention to the atrocities our enlisted soldiers and families have endured. Vanessa Guillen didn't deserve the treatment she received from her peers. The family continues to search for answers. The American GI Forum will continue to advocate for the Guillen family.

Black Lives Matter and the insurrection on the US Capitol brought attention to the state of democracy of our United States of America. Once again, the American GI Forum responded to the attack on the democracy of ALL Americans.

This conference will challenge the National Board of Directors in making decisions which will provide direction for the future of the American GI Forum along with addressing current Veteran, civil right, and education issues. It is also a time to reaffirm our commitment to advocate for Veterans, Veteran Families as well as highlighting those who recognize the value of the American GI Forum along with promoting the importance of civil rights, and ensuring we live up to our motto, *"Education is our Freedom and Freedom Should be Everybody's Business."*

A special "Thank You" to all Veterans for serving and protecting our country especially those who continue to serve as members of the American GI Forum. I want to thank the Conference Committee for all their hard work to make this conference a reality.

Lastly, as the American GI Forum membership is challenged to live up to the **Legacy of Dr. Hector P. Garcia**; they also meet the challenges in supporting our communities.

Regards,

Dora Gonzales  
American GI Forum  
National Chairwoman



*The officers of the Miguel Hernandez Jr. Memorial Chapter, Inc. is pleased to welcome everyone to the 2021 Mid-Year Conference of the American GI Forum of the United States. Thank you for your support and participation.*



**Larry Romo**  
National Commander



**Frank Archuleta**  
Commander



**Roy Reyes**  
Vice-Commander



**Rudy Gamboa**  
Treasurer



**Cosme Barcelo**  
Secretary



**Yvette Reyes**  
Chaplain



**Roman Pena**  
Mid-Year Conference Coordinator

American GI Forum-  
Miguel Hernandez Jr.,  
Memorial Chapter  
San Antonio, Texas



2021

## AGIF NATIONAL MID-YEAR CONFERENCE MID-YEAR AGENDA

*THEME: "A TIME TO HEAL AND THE FUTURE IS NOW"*

### April 22, 2021 (Thursday)

6:00pm to 8:30pm CST

#### Virtual Happy Hour

(Hosted by the Miguel Hernandez Chapter, Workshop on the History of the American GI Forum, Miguel Hernandez Chapter, Roy Reyes and Juan Mireles Moderators, Yolanda Ayala/producer.

### April 23, 2021 (Friday) CST

8:30am-8:40am	Meeting Call to Order National Commander
8:40am-8:45am	Official Prayer National Chaplain
8:45am-8:50am	Pledge of Allegiance National Sgt-at-Arms
8:50am-9:00am	Roll Call National Secretary
9:00am-9:05am	Guests Introductions National Commander
9:05am-9:15am	Mid-Year Conference Rules National Sgt-at-Arms
9:15am-9:25am	Approval the Agenda
9:25am-9:40am	Reading of Correspondences National Office Manager
9:40am-10:00am	Reading the Minutes National Secretary
10:00am-10:15am	Treasurer Financial Report National Treasurer
10:15am-10:30pm	Break
10:30am-11:00am	2019 National Conference Report National Treasurer
11:00am-12:00pm	State Commanders Report All State Commanders
12:00pm-1:00pm	Lunch on your own

### General Session Reconvenes

1:00pm-1:30pm National Committee Chair Appointments

1. Awards- Russell Lopez, Leona Flores, Rebecca Lugo, Barbara Olivas, Ceasar Ruiz
2. Resolutions- Jake Alarid and Mario Perales
3. Amendments- Ron Garcia and Leona Flores
4. Nominations- All Past National Commanders & Chairwomen
5. Financial- Luis Vasquez-Contes
6. Elections- Ruth Sanchez, Sarah Chavarria, Jim Galvan
7. Legal Advisor- Esau Herrera
8. Parliamentarian- Frank Archuleta

1:30pm-2:00pm Women Forum, Veterans Forum and Youth Forum Breakout

2:00pm-3:00pm AGIF Constitution Review

3:00pm-4:00pm VA Presentation

4:00pm-4:30pm MALDEF Briefing on Redistricting

4:30pm-4:45pm Break

4:50pm-6:30pm AGIF Executive Session

## April 24, 2021 (Saturday) CST

8:30am-8:35am	General Session Reconvenes	
8:35am-8:40am	Meeting Call To Order	
8:40am-8:45am	Official Prayer	National Chaplain
8:45am-8:50am	Pledge of Allegiance	National Sgt-at-Arms
8:50am-9:00am	Roll Call	National Secretary
9:00am-9:15am	Texas State Representative Phil Cortez Speech	
9:15am-9:30pm	Texas State Senator Cesar Blanco Speech	
9:30am-9:45am	House Veterans Affairs Chairman Speech	
9:45am-10:00am	SER Brief	
10am-Noon	AGIF Constitution Review/Gen. Ramirez Video	
Noon-1pm	Lunch on Your Own	
1:00pm-1:30pm	2020 AGIF Annual Audit Report	
1:30pm-2:00pm	AGIF Resolutions	
2:00pm-5pm	Unfinished Business	
	New Business	
	2022 National Mid-Year conference bid	
	Announcements	
	Good and Welfare	
	Prayer	
	Meeting Adjourned	



We are a nation of many nationalities, many races, many religions-bound together by a single unity, the unity of freedom and equality. Whoever seeks to set one nationality against another seeks to degrade all nationalities.

Woodrow Wilson

1898

*"Education is Our Freedom and Freedom Should be Everybody's Business"*

## American GI Forum National Officers

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National Legal Advisor	Esau Herrera	esaulawyer@gmail.com



# AMERICAN GI FORUM

## 2021 MID-YEAR NATIONAL CONFERENCE

### April 22-24, 2021

*Serving Veterans and Families since 1948*

### **Basic History of the American GI Forum**

The American G.I. Forum (AGIF) is a Congressionally chartered Hispanic Veterans Organization founded in 1948. AGIF operates chapters throughout the United States, with a focus on veterans' issues, education, and civil rights.

Its two largest national programs are the San Antonio-based Veterans Outreach Program, and the Dallas-based Service, Employment, Redevelopment-Jobs for Progress, Inc. (SER). The current National Commander is Lawrence G. Romo.

The organization was established in Corpus Christi, on March 26, 1948, by Dr. Hector P. Garcia to address the concerns of Mexican American veterans, who were segregated from other veterans groups. Initially formed to request services for World War II veterans of Mexican descent who were denied medical services by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the AGIF soon entered into non-veteran's issues such as voting rights, jury selection, and educational desegregation, advocating for the civil rights of all Mexican Americans. In 1959, the organization claimed 25,000 members in 18 states. Today, the AGIF advocates on behalf of Hispanic veterans and all veterans in general. The American GI Forum's motto is: "Education is Our Freedom and Freedom should be Everybody's Business."

The American GI Forum today continues to be a beacon of hope and an avenue for involvement for the returning veteran and/or the ordinary citizen aspiring to improve conditions within his own community. Local, State and National Conferences continue to promote and move forward with its goals and objectives

#### **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

1. Help members to develop leadership skills
2. Protect the rights of all veterans and their families
3. Provide resources to veterans and their families to secure their benefits
4. Provide and secure funds for scholarship programs for Hispanic youth
5. Support the improvement of educational opportunities for Hispanic youth
6. Provide employment and training to all veteran through the American GI Forum National Veterans Outreach Program
7. Provide housing and case management to homeless veterans through the American GI Forum Residential Center for Homeless Veterans.
8. Partner with Community Service Providers to assist recently released Veterans reaching out for transitional assistance and supportive services.



## Our Casas Resident Council, Inc.

2300 W. Commerce St. Ste. #218

San Antonio, Texas 78207

Phone: (210) 354-2400 Fax: (210) 354-2404 Email: [ourcasas@stic.net](mailto:ourcasas@stic.net)

New website: [ourcasas.org](http://ourcasas.org)

*Our Casas Resident Council, Inc. was founded in 1990 to empower the residents of San Antonio to meet their housing and economic needs. Our Casas provides the following:*

### Housing Counseling Services

- Pre-purchase Homebuyer Education Workshops
- First-time Homebuyer Counseling, including budget and credit counseling
- Mortgage Default Prevention
- Non-Delinquency Post Purchase
- Homebuyer Education Certificates
- HUD-certified housing counseling agency
- No-cost services in English and Spanish
- Virtual services available via phone, email, Zoom, and DocuSign

### Construction and sale of affordable homes

- Our Casas is rebuilding our community one family at a time through its affordable home construction projects as a Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO)
- Accepting applications from first-time homebuyers earning 80% or less of area's average median income for three new, affordable homes to be built in the near Westside during next 12 months
- Upcoming Zarzamora Affordable Homes Project includes five, new homes west of South Zarzamora on Vera Cruz, Santiago, and Chihuahua Streets –contact Our Casas to help you prepare to become a first-time homeowner!

### Our Casas Model Home



**Our Casas Staff:** Zeke Romo, Executive Director  
Juan Gutierrez, Housing Counselor  
Robert Ramirez, Intake Specialist

#### Board of Directors:

Nick Peña, Board Chairperson; Angela Garcia, Vice-President; Laura Sosa; Secretary  
David Soto, Richard Gonzalez, Lupe Torres, and Rosa Rosales, board members



Our Casas Resident Council, Inc. is an equal opportunity housing agency funded by Nueva Esperanza, Inc., City of San Antonio HUD/HOME program, LiftFund, Bexar County, and LISC of San Antonio.



Let your High School Seniors know about the Army Reserve Minuteman Scholarship. It covers covers full tuition and fees at any college or university served by an Army Reserve Officer's Training Corps (ROTC) program, or can be used toward room and board, capped at \$10,000 per year.

The American GI Forum Point of Contact:

**FRANK J. ARCHULETA**  
LTC, MS (Retired) U.S. Army  
Texas Army Reserve Ambassador  
Email: [ndame9@yahoo.com](mailto:ndame9@yahoo.com)



**LEONA FLORES**

National Vice Chairwoman  
for the AGIF-US



**Milton I. Fagin, PLLC**  
**Attorney at Law**

**210.736.4423**



National Commander Romo  
with Former  
National Commander  
Luis Vasques Contes  
and  
Former National Womens Chair  
Patsy Vasques Contes



Dolores Huerta with National Commander Romo



# Congratulations from Your Friends in California



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*Thank you to all our military men and woman.*



# Edgewood District Veterans, Inc.

SERVING THE EDGEWOOD COMMUNITY  
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS



## ANNOUNCING OUR

## 12th Annual Scholarship Golf Classic In Memory and Honor of Blas Alvarado

**LOCATION: Golf Club of Texas 13600 Briggs Ranch San Antonio, TX 78245**

### MAY 21, 2021

Registration: 7:00am  
Tee Time: 8:30am  
Register by May 14th

#### ENTRY FEES:

**\$100 per player \$400 per team**  
Fees include cart fees, range balls  
Breakfast Tacos & Lunch

#### HOLE SPONSORSHIPS:

Available from \$250 per hole

### PRIZES

**\*Hole -in-One 2021Kia**  
**\*First Place \$400 \*Second Place \$200 \*Third Place \$100**  
**\*Closest -to-the-Pin \*Longest Drive \*Raffle**  
**\*Door Prizes (For Players Only)**  
**\*Mulligans (3 for \$10) \*Monster Drive (\$20/all team)**

#### Registration Information

Mail Registration Form and Payments  
Edgewood District Veterans Golf Committee  
P.O. Box 37494  
San Antonio, TX 78237

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Cash Checks Visa MasterCard American Express

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Contact Roberto Valle (210) 683-4771 [rvalle16@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rvalle16@sbcglobal.net)  
Memorial Signs available. Contact Charles Zambrano (210) 717-8410  
for price information.



***Serving Veterans Since 1972***  
***49 years of proudly serving***  
***those who served our Nation***

*Main Office: 611 N. Flores, San Antonio, TX 78205 -(210) 223-4088*

*Dallas: 8700 N. Stemmons Fwy. Ste. 124 Dallas, TX 75247 -(214) 379-7377*

*El Paso: 5959 Gateway West, Ste. 644, El Paso, TX 79925 -(915) 774-0525*

*Houston: 2600 S. Loop West., Ste. 610, Houston, TX 77054-(713) 666-4796*

*Fort Worth: 2601 Scott Ave., Ste. 600., Fort Worth, TX 76103-(817) 289-0055*

*Residential Center: 519 N. Medina, San Antonio, TX 78207*

*Veterans Enterprise of Texas: 219 Tampico, San Antonio, TX 78207*

*Website: [www.agif-nvop.org](http://www.agif-nvop.org)*

*Toll Free #: 1-877-JOB-4VET (562-4838)*

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***In Memory of Mr. Carlos Martinez***  
***President & CEO***  
***November 1946– August 2020***



# Philip Cortez, Ph.D.

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

*House District 117*



Captain Philip Cortez, USAF  
Ret., supports our veterans  
at the Texas Capitol.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Philip Cortez".

**District Office:**

2600 S.W. Military Dr., Ste. 211

San Antonio, TX 78224

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# CÉSAR J. BLANCO

## Texas Senator



### Member of the Committees On:

- Health and Human Services
- Higher Education
- Transportation
- Veteran Affairs and Border Security

Phone Number: (915) 595-5955

[District29.Blanco@Senate.Texas.Gov](mailto:District29.Blanco@Senate.Texas.Gov)

From one veteran to another, thank you for your service to our country and for your continued service to veterans and their families.

My office is here to help with you with your mission.



@CesarJBlanco



@CesarforTexas



@CesarBlancoTX

# American GI Forum: Our Tejano Legends



At the 2010 State Conference in Austin, Texas, I asked Ms. Wanda Garcia if she would share her knowledge of the early pioneers that helped Dr. Garcia Form this organization. She complied with the following historical article. It is my pleasure to share this article for your use.

## Our Tejano Legends

We have all heard the expression, "There are no accidents." The truth is all that we experience is by plan, and so is what we attract to our physical world. I have always believed that God sends special people to this earth to accomplish specific work on this earth and the right people and circumstances turn up to help with the effort.

My father Dr. Hector P. Garcia belonged to this category of special people.

Papa's mission was the liberation of the Mexican American people from their oppressive reality. Early on, he knew he had a mission to help his people.

In the 40s and 50s, the quality of life was dim for Mexican Americans. They attended segregated schools, rarely completed grammar school, could not hope to get



a fair trial by jury, and could only aspire to hold menial jobs. The poll tax kept low-income Hispanics from voting.

Even Mexican American students who spoke English were placed in segregated schools.

This is the world my father was born into and these conditions provided him with the impetus to make the world better not only for him but for his people.

My Papa was not the only one chosen for this mission. Among the Tejanos were Dr. Hector P. Garcia, Dr. Clotilde Garcia, Gustavo Garcia, Dr. George I. Sanchez, Cristobal Aldrete, Ed Idar, and James DeAnda. Vicente Ximenes who met my father in Corpus Christi, Texas returned to his home and blazed a path in New Mexico by working on desegregation issues.

Together with **Louis and Isabella Telles** they Started the American GI Forum in a Second

State. These men had special skills needed to meet challenges in the areas of health, education and law.

## Dr. Hector P. Garcia

Dr. Hector worked tirelessly on his mission to improve the lot of the Mexican American People. He attended segregated schools in Mercedes Texas. Graduated at the top of his class at the University of Texas at Austin and UTMB in Galveston.

He joined the U.S. Army and



served in the European theatre in the infantry, the Corps of Engineers, and in the Medical Corps. Dr. Garcia earned the Bronze

Star with six battle stars for his bravery during the war. Later after being honorably discharged he returned to Corpus Christi to begin his private medical practice.

He became a doctor for the Veterans Administration where he soon learned about the plight of the veteran to obtain benefits. He was instrumental in desegregating the Nueces county hospital system and the Naval Air Station hospital.

Dr. Garcia organized the American G.I. Forum to help the veterans. Later, the AGIF became involved with desegregating the school systems and the obtaining equity for Mexican Americans in the court system. The American G.I. Forum is a national organization.

Dr. Garcia was recognized world wide for his work. The lists of honors are so numerous, that I will not mention them. The



Dr. Hector P. Garcia, George I. Sanchez and Gustavo Garcia

award that meant the most to him was the **Medal of Freedom** award given to him by President Ronald Reagan. He told the President, "Now I feel that I have truly arrived as an American."



Dr. Garcia is a model for us all and the embodiment of the American Dream.

### Dr. Clotilde P. Garcia

When Dr. Cleo came into my life I was a child. Cleo was pursuing higher education and raising her son Tony Canales. She wanted to attend Medical School but did not know if she could afford it. Dr. Hector, her brother inspired her and she applied. Cleo graduated at the top of her class and returned to Corpus Christi Texas to practice medicine. During the span of her long career she delivered 10,000 babies.

Cleo actively promoted the research, collection and development of genealogical data on Spanish/Mexican settlers of South Texas. She amassed a huge collection of genealogical books from Spain about one thousand volumes she used during research. She donated the collection to the library at Texas A&M University

because she believed in the importance of taking pride in our roots and culture. Dr. Cleo was a role model for us. She held traditional beliefs, yet was a trailblazer. Dr. Cleo served on the Del Mar Board of regents for 22 years.

She served on various state commissions. She was an accomplished historian writing 10 books about the history of north-



eastern Mexico and South Texas.

In 1990, United States Senator Lloyd M. Bentsen Jr. honored Dr. Cleo as

"A Rediscoverer of Texas. Juan Carlos I, King of Spain presented Dr. Cleo with the order of Isabella the Catholica in honor of her work and contribution to our Spanish American heritage.

In 1990, His Holiness Pope John Paul II awarded Dr. Cleo with the "Benemerenti" Pontifical Decoration Medal. Being a single mother and a pioneer in a field dominated by males inspires us to climb over the barriers.

In 1984, Dr. Cleo was inducted

into the first Texas Women's Hall of Fame. She was recognized for her service as a doctor and for her concern for the needs of Mexican-American people. She is a pioneer for all women.

### Gustavo Garcia

When Attorney Gustavo Garcia "Gus" came in my life, he had a long and distinguished list of accomplishments in the work of desegregating schools in Texas and other states. He became first lieutenant in the United States Army, and was stationed in Japan with the judge advocate corps.

In 1949, he represented the family of **Pvt. Felix Longoria**. From 1951 to 1952, he was the legal advisor for the AGIF. In 1952, Garcia was an attorney in



Gustavo Garcia in the Courtroom, above and walking Washington D.C., right.

the case of Hernandez v. State of Texas. The case eventually went before the Supreme Court.



Gustavo argued that Hernandez was denied a fair trial because an all white jury decided the trial. Garcia presented such a brilliant case

that Chief Justice Warren allowed him an extra 15 minutes to present his arguments. Gustavo Garcia died before his time. A brilliant career cut short because of personal demons. As I reflect on Gus' life, I wonder whether his life might have ended differently if he had not dealt with issues degrading his people. His memory will always haunt me.

### Dr. George I. Sanchez

Dr. George I. Sanchez dedicated his life to improving the educational opportunities for Hispanics. He questioned school funding, the use of standardized tests, segregation based on non-proficiency in English and other discriminatory practices against Spanish speaking schoolchildren.



While in New Mexico, Dr. Sanchez

challenged the use of standardized tests with Spanish-speaking children and equalization of school funding in the school system. His success came at a personal price, though.

The opposing side used their influence to withhold a tenured position at the University of New Mexico. One door closed and another door opened. In 1940, San-

chez accepted an invitation from the University of Texas at Austin to teach Latin American Studies where he remained until his death in 1972.

### Cristobal Aldrete

Papa always said that Cris single handedly desegregated the Del Rio ISD. In fact, Cris had a long history of being involved in school desegregation cases. In 1949, he lodged a complaint with the Texas Department of



Education against the segregated Del Rio school system on behalf of the Alba Club founded by Cris. Ultimately, the state required that public schools in

Texas end segregation based on national origin by September of 1949. Cris was involved in the case of Delgado v. Bastrop Independent School District. Aldrete was one of five attorneys representing Hernandez on behalf of the AGIF and LULAC in Hernandez v. State of Texas. Cris soon found Dr. Hector. In August 1952, he and Dr. Hector P. Garcia, traveled throughout the Southwest promoting the organization to make the organization national in scope. They traveled through four states and organized AGIF chapters in 19 cities in two weeks. Cris served for many elected officials throughout his distinguished public service career.

I became acquainted with Cris while he served in the American G.I. Forum (AGIF), as State Chairman in 1953. Later I had the honor of working with Cris for several years when he worked for U.S. Senator Lloyd M Bentsen Jr. We lost touch when he retired

### Ed Idar

I never became close to Ed, but remember seeing him at the



AGIF conventions. He served as State Chairman. Later I would hear his name in conversation. Ed was born into of a family of political activists.

Idar's father, aunt and grandfather were both newspaper printers before and after the Mexican Revolution. In 1938, Idar served as a civilian employee and soldier of the U.S. Army, working in England, India and China in the 1940s. While in China, Idar earned both the Bronze Star and the Army Commendation Medal, and rose to the rank of Technical Sergeant. He was honorably discharged from the service in 1946.

Idar earned his Bachelor of Arts in journalism at The University of Texas at Austin in 1949. At UT, he was a member of the Alba and Laredo clubs, and began to work with Hector P. Garcia during the founding of the American G.I. Forum (AGIF).

Idar served as both chairman and executive secretary of the AGIF in Texas. There, he and others worked towards increasing the Mexican American influence in the political arena, and fought against segregation in the schools. Idar graduated from the University Of Texas School Of Law, and eventually set up his own legal practices in McAllen and later San Angelo.

In 1970, Idar became an attorney for the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF). While with MALDEF, he worked on several civil rights cases, including Regester v. Bull-



*Ed Idar, right receiving one of his many awards.*

ock, a case that brought about single-member legislative districts in Bexar County.

In 1974, Idar took the position of Assistant Attorney General for the State of Texas, and assisted in several police brutality cases. Idar argued the landmark prison rights case in *Ruiz v. Estelle* on the side of the Texas Department of Corrections.

In retirement, Idar stayed involved in various Mexican American interest groups and participated in talks and panels on education and civil rights. Idar died on 11 October 2003, at the age of 82.

### James DeAnda

"Jimmy", was what family members called him when he would come to visit us. He had this standing joke. He would hold his arm at shoulder level and then say the he would marry Cecilia my sister when she grew that high. His easy manner and jovial appearance concealed a razor sharp intellect, which made him succeed in legal battles. Papa met DeAnda while he was working for Carlos Cadena writing briefs for *Hernandez v. State of Texas*. Lat-

er, DeAnda served as legal counsel for the American G.I. Forum. Both Papa and DeAnda formed a lifelong friendship that lasted until his death in 1996.

DeAnda challenged substandard schooling for Mexican American children, voting rights, and employment cases. He helped to establish, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund. James DeAnda, served as one of the lawyers on the *Hernandez v. Texas*. This ruling was significant because it gave

Mexican Americans status as a distinct legal classification entitled to equal protection under the



Constitution. Later, Mr. DeAnda handled a series of important school desegregation cases, among them *Hernandez v. Driscoll*

Independent School District in 1956. It challenged a school system that required children from Spanish-speaking families to spend three years in the first grade because of a presumed need to learn English.

In 1979, Mr. DeAnda was appointed by President Carter to the federal bench in the Southern District of Texas. He was the nation's second Mexican American federal judge and served for 13 years, including four as chief judge. DeAnda died in 2006.

The sacrifices and work of all these men opened many doors for Mexican Americans. Let us never forget them and let us ensure that history does not. As Papa used to say, "Que Dios los bendiga." ❖



*Dr. Garcia, James DeAnda with Robert Kennedy*

# American GI Forum: The Legend Continues



Dr. Hector P. Garcia at a Conference (above) A newspaper Announcement of a Meeting in 1948 (right).

Early in 1948, 34-year-old Dr. Hector P. Garcia and over 700 veterans met at Lamar School Auditorium in Corpus Christi Texas to address the needs of the returning veterans and their families. The group voted to form a permanent group and elected Hector Garcia as its leader.

With purpose and pride, the group adopted the name of the American GI Forum with the absence of ethnic identification to prove that they were Americans and proud of it. GI was the term used for the common soldier and Forum was the group's commitment to open public debate.

With a constitution a logo was developed, patriotic in nature with the colors red, white and blue and 13 stars representing the original 13 colonies, but the 13th star appeared in the middle



President George Bush congratulates Dr. Hector P. Garcia (above) Dr. Garcia in Medical School in Galveston (right)



area above the organizational name symbolizing the star of David on top convey the organization's religious conscience.

Early on they developed a commitment of non-violence—a concept developed by Mohatma Gandhi in India and ahead of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.—ahead of its time in 1948.

Under the leadership of Dr. Garcia the Forum began pressuring the VA for benefits that had all but been denied to Mexican American Veterans.

These gains prompted the growth of the Forum as Mexican Americans in other areas began to hear of the gains and successes of the Corpus Christi group and by July of 1948 sim-



ilar groups had been formed in eleven towns surrounding Corpus Christi. By December of the same year, forty Texas Communities had an American GI Forum Chapter.

This movement forward encouraged Dr. Garcia and his groups to push ahead in seeking to defend the rights of Mexican Americans in an increasingly larger scale.

Nothing motivated the organization's work more than the Felix Longoria controversy of early 1949.

The refusal to wake a soldier killed in action during the last days of the war by a Three Rivers Funeral Home prompted Dr. Garcia and the American GI Forum to take action and take on the issue. With Garcia in control, he appealed to the local Funeral director with no results, as the funeral director held firm. Dr. Garcia not one to stand idly by on a matter of such disregard for the rights and integrity of veteran, pursued the matter with telegrams to the Texas Congressional Delegation in Washington, among them a newly elected Texas Senator, Lyndon B. Johnson.

The result was a hero's burial at Arlington National Cemetery in Washington D.C. It also resulted in the emergence of a strong voice for Mexican-American Veterans and the beginning of many battles involving desegregation of schools, places of business, ending job discrimination and involving more Latinos in areas not traditionally open to them. To this end more Mexican American everywhere turned to Dr. Garcia and the Forum in their pursuit for equality.

*I hope this will help with your historical part of the Mid-year. This is from the 2010 State Conference Program given to all registered guests. We plan to do the same for our National Conference in San Antonio in August and will feature Cristobal Aldrete. Good luck with your conference.*



**CONGRATULATIONS FROM YOUR FRIENDS IN CALIFORNIA**  
**AMERICAN GI FORUM, DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA**  
**GOING STRONG**





Let your High School Seniors know about the Army Reserve Minuteman Scholarship. It covers covers full tuition and fees at any college or university served by an Army Reserve Officer's Training Corps (ROTC) program, or can be used toward room and board, capped at \$10,000 per year. The American GI Forum Point of Contact:

**FRANK J. ARCHULETA**  
**LTC, MS (Retired) U.S. Army**  
**Texas Army Reserve Ambassador**  
**Email: [ndame9@yahoo.com](mailto:ndame9@yahoo.com)**



# USS MIGUEL KEITH (ESB 5) Commissioning

Commissioning Information for USS MIGUEL KEITH (ESB 5)

**Miguel Keith**  
Military Personnel

Miguel Keith was a United States Marine who posthumously received the United States's highest military decoration – the Medal of Honor for heroism in Vietnam in May 1970. Despite being severely wounded, he advanced on enemy attackers, allowing his platoon to rout the attack of a numerically superior enemy force.

SUPPORT THE COMMISSIONING

# Commissioning May 8, 2021

Broadway Pier, San Diego, California



As a Lance Corporal in the United States Marine Corps, operating with the Third Marine Amphibious Force in Vietnam, a severely wounded LCPL Keith was mortally wounded when he braved concentrated hostile fire to charge an estimated twenty-five enemy soldiers who were massing to attack. His actions contributed to the success of his platoon in routing a numerically superior enemy force.

The future USS Miguel Keith is the third ship of the Lewis B. Puller class of Expeditionary Staging Bases.

Miguel Keith was originally operated by the Military Sealift Command and is being commissioned to allow the U.S. Navy greater operational flexibility.

[Learn More](#)

In May 2021, at Broadway Pier in downtown San Diego, California the Commissioning Ceremony and events surrounding it will commemorate the legacy of Miguel Keith and welcome the ship that bears his name into the active fleet of the United States Navy.

[Learn More](#)

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**American GI Forum of the US**

August 10, 2020 · 🌐

## ***Update on Death of Carlos Martinez, President/CEO AGIF/NVOP***



This is an update for those of you that have not received the news of the loss of an American GI Forum (AGIF) National Veterans Outreach Program (NVOP) icon, Mr. Carlos Martinez, President/CEO. The news of his passing was shocking, devastating and incredible to the NVOP, the AGIF Family and to the Veteran Community.

He was in communication with the NVOP all throughout his battle with COVID-19. He had lost his wife almost four weeks earlier of COVID-19.

As of Monday, August 3rd he communicated that he had a good night's rest and was feeling much better.. The following day, he could no longer fight the virus that takes a healthy body and ravishes it with its venom. Carlos passed at approximately 1:30 pm of a heart attack for which he had no underlying condition.

He was emailing and responding to emails and texts as late as Monday, Aug 3rd. He loved the NVOP and made it what it is today. He is known and respected locally and nationally as a very distinguished and intellectual Leader. His mentoring, guidance, and meticulous manner in which he lead will be greatly missed. He has been a great leader and was always thinking of what was the best for the organization, its employees and the veterans served.

Senior Vice President Yolanda Suarez, worked for Carlos for 42 years, by Board action will be assuming and serving as Interim President and CEO.

"I know in my heart that he wants us to continue his love of service to veterans. It will be a bumpy road ahead for us all but with his continued support from paradise, we will prevail." Yolanda said.

The NVOP Board of Directors and the American GI Forum leadership supports Ms. Suarez on her new role and will continue their support of the NVOP.



National Commander Romo with Former  
National Commander Luis Vasques Contes  
and  
Former National Womens Chair Patsy  
Vasques Contes



Dolores Huerta with National Commander Romo

**NATIONAL  
VIETNAM WAR VETERANS DAY  
29 MARCH**

*Join the Nation... Thank a Vietnam Veteran  
for Service to our Nation*

*U.S. Armed Forces personnel with active duty service between  
November 1, 1955 to May 15, 1975, regardless of location of service.*



[vietnamwar50th.com](http://vietnamwar50th.com)





## American GI Forum of the US

July 2, 2020 · 🌐

### Congressional Investigation Called



Lawrence  
Romo  
National  
Commander

**American GI Forum of the United States**  
A Veterans Family Organization Since 1948 Chartered by Congress 1956  
National Office

635 W. Corone Ave, Suite 114 • Pueblo, CO 81004  
(719) 299-4838/4100

Founded  
March 26,  
1948

#### **American GI Forum of the US Demands a Congressional Investigation Into the Deaths of PFC Vanessa Guillen and PV2 Gregory Morales**

The American GI Forum of the US demands a Congressional Investigation into the deaths of PFC Vanessa Guillen and PV2 Gregory Morales.

The American GI Forum of the US proudly advocates for our military, veterans and their families. It is essential all of our military members are protected from harm. We must have a Congressional investigation to assess the process when a military member goes missing and to determine the practices the military conducts from day one to find the military member. The safety protocols of our military members in the workplace, in the military dormitories, and within the military community must be reviewed.

The American GI Forum of the US offers our sincere condolences to the families of PFC Guillen and PV2 Morales.

The parents of our young men and women that join our military and our military members must have the trust of our military leaders and in each other to protect their personal wellness where no harm will come to them. This did not happen at Fort Hood, Texas. If we do not fix this issue now, then it will be difficult to recruit our youth into the military and get military members to re-enlist.

The American GI Forum of the US is a Congressionally Chartered Veterans Family Organization that advocates for our military, veterans, civil and equal rights and educational access for all.

Lawrence G. Romo  
National Commander

RELEASE: July 1, 2020



## American GI Forum of the US

January 18 at 6:17 PM · 🌐



### American GI Forum - Saginaw, MI Chapter

January 18 at 4:57 AM

On this day in history, let's remember the birthday of Mexican American civil rights icon Dr. Hector Garcia. Dr. Garcia was born on January 17, 1914. Garcia volunteered for the Army where he served as an infantry officer, a combat engineer officer, and a Medical Corps officer and surgeon.

He was a trailblazer, founding the American G.I. Forum in 1948, which fought for civil rights for Mexican American veterans in high-profile desegregation cases.

He earned the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1984, and in fact, he was the first Mexican American to receive this prestigious recognition. Garcia passed away in 1996. #LatinoTrailblazers



## American GI Forum of the US

July 26, 2020 · 🌐



### Daisy Garcia

July 26, 2012

Dear Friends,

Today marks sixteen years since Dr. Hector passed away. To commemorate the event, I have attached a picture of my father at a mature age standing behind the grave marker of Pvt. Felix Longoria. The Longoria Affair is where my father's advocacy work for veterans and Hispanics through the American GI Forum began. Eventually his activities through his organization would earn my Papa the Presidential Medal of Freedom conferred on him by President Ronald Reagan. Today we honor his memory. Let us offer a prayer for Dr. Hector P. Garcia. Best Regards,

Wanda Garcia

*This year on July 26, 2021 marks 25 years. Larry Romo, National Commmander of the American GI Forum states it is time to ask Congress for a Holiday of the passing of Dr. Hector Garcia to be on April 20, 2021*



American GI Forum of the US

July 25, 2020 · 🌐



Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta



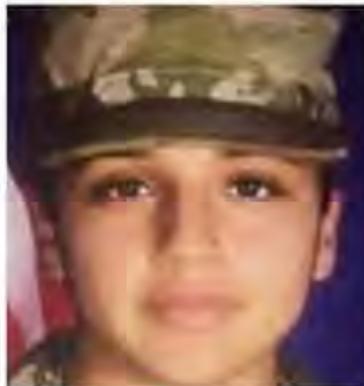
American GI Forum of the US

June 30, 2020 · 🌐

We'll never forget you. Rest in peace.



**AMERICAN GI FORUM OF PUEBLO, COLORADO**



On behalf of the American GI Forum Pueblo Chapters, both men and women, we send our deepest heartfelt condolences to the Guillen Family. Words cannot even begin to express the family's sorrow. Your service will never be forgotten and your sacrifice can never be repaid. With loving memories of Pfc. Vanessa Guillen, may her soul rest in eternal paradise. We will keep Vanessa in our hearts and prayers forever!



Lawrence  
Romo  
National  
Commander

**American GI Forum of the United States**  
A Veterans Family Organization Since 1948 Chartered by Congress 1984  
National Office

535 W. Central Ave, Suite 114 • Pueblo, CO 81004  
(719) 299-4828/4408

Founded  
March 26,  
1948

### **American GI Forum of the US Supports Renaming of Military Installations Named after Traitors, and Supporters of the Confederacy and Renaming Fort Hood to Fort Benavidez**

The American GI Forum of the US (AGIF) emphatically supports the renaming of the Military Installations named after traitors and supporters of the Confederacy that fought against the United States. These traitors and sympathizers demonstrated to be no less than enemies of the United States. The AGIF vehemently supports renaming Fort Hood to **Fort Benavidez**, after Master Sergeant Raul Perez "Roy" Benavidez, a true American hero and Medal of Honor Recipient.

The American GI Forum strongly endorses the renaming of Fort Hood to **Fort Benavidez**. Master Sergeant Raul Perez "Roy" Benavidez was a member of the United States Army Special Forces and a retired United States Army Master Sergeant who received the Medal of Honor for his valorous actions in combat near Lộc Ninh, South Vietnam on May 2, 1968.

The American GI Forum whole-heartedly supports the bi-partisan efforts to rename these military facilities: Fort Benning, GA, Fort Bragg, NC, Fort Hood, TX, Fort Lee, VA, Fort Gordon, GA, Fort Polk, LA, Fort A.P. Hill, VA, Fort Pickett, VA, Fort Rucker, AL and Camp Beauregard, LA. These military installations are named after traitors, supporters of the Confederacy, many owning slaves and fighting to maintain slavery. These installations should be named after heroes and positive role models who were loyal to the United States of America.

The American GI Forum of the US is a Congressionally Chartered Veterans Family Organization that advocates for our military, veterans, civil and equal rights and educational access for all.

Lawrence G. Romo  
National Commander

RELEASE: June 29, 2020



## American GI Forum of the US

June 18, 2020 - 🌐

### DACA Decision News from the National Commander

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Lawrence  
Romo  
National  
Commander

#### **American GI Forum of the United States**

*A Veterans Family Organization Since 1948 Chartered by Congress 1988*

*National Office*

535 W. Corona Ave, Suite 114 • Pueblo, CO 81004

(719) 299-4200/4071

Founded  
March 26,  
1948

#### **AGIF STATEMENT ON US SUPREME COURT DACA DECISION – JUNE 18, 2020**

**The American GI Forum of the United States lauds the decision by the United States Supreme Court to allow Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program (DACA) recipients to remain in the United States. Some of individuals have gone on to serve in our United States military and others have become positive influencers in our Country and productive members of our society.**

**We encourage Congress to produce a bi-partisan Comprehensive Immigration Reform bill and pass this bill for the Greater Good of our Country.**

**May God Bless the United States of America!**

**Lawrence G. Romo  
American GI Forum National Commander**



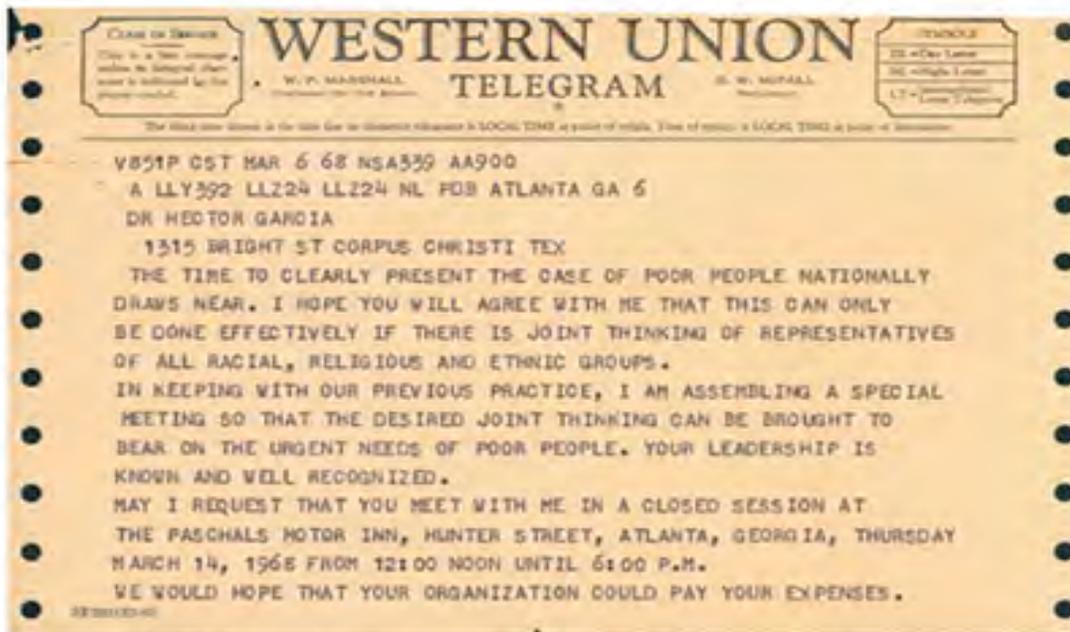
# American GI Forum of the US

June 8, 2020 - 🌐

## From the National commander

Larry Romo  
AGIF National Commander

Want to share a historical telegram that Dr Martin Luther King sent in March 1968 to Dr Hector P. Garcia, the American GI Forum National Commander and the founder. Dr King wanted the American GI Forum and Dr Garcia to collaborate with him and other racial, religious and ethnic groups to help the poor in our Country. Dr Hector P. Garcia was the first Mexican-American to receive the Presidential of Freedom. I am honored and proud to follow in the footsteps of Dr Hector P. Garcia as the current American GI Forum National Commander and stand with our African-American brothers and sisters and say "Black Lives Matter." All of us must work together to ensure there is no race, ethnic, religious, or sexual orientation discrimination! **Si Se Puede!**





## American GI Forum of the US

May 22, 2020 · 🌐

The American GI Forum of the US respectfully salutes all those who made the ultimate sacrifice.



The American GI Forum of the US solemnly and with respect salutes the sacrifices of our Armed Forces.

Memorial Day commemorates the men and women who died while in the military service of their country, particularly those who died in battle or as a result of wounds sustained in battle. In other words, the purpose of Memorial Day is to memorialize the veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country. We spend time remembering those who lost their lives and could not come home, reflecting on their service and why we have the luxury and freedom that we enjoy today. We might consider how we can support and safeguard their grieving families and loved ones who are left behind.

Memorial Day is a federal holiday in the United States for honoring and mourning the military personnel who had died while serving in the United States Armed Forces. The holiday is now observed on the last Monday of May, having been observed on May 30 from 1868 to 1970.

On this Memorial Day the American GI Forum of the US reminds all Americans to:

- Remember the Fallen
- Honor their Service and Sacrifice
- And Rejoice in your Freedom
- To honor those who answered the call to duty



## American GI Forum of the US

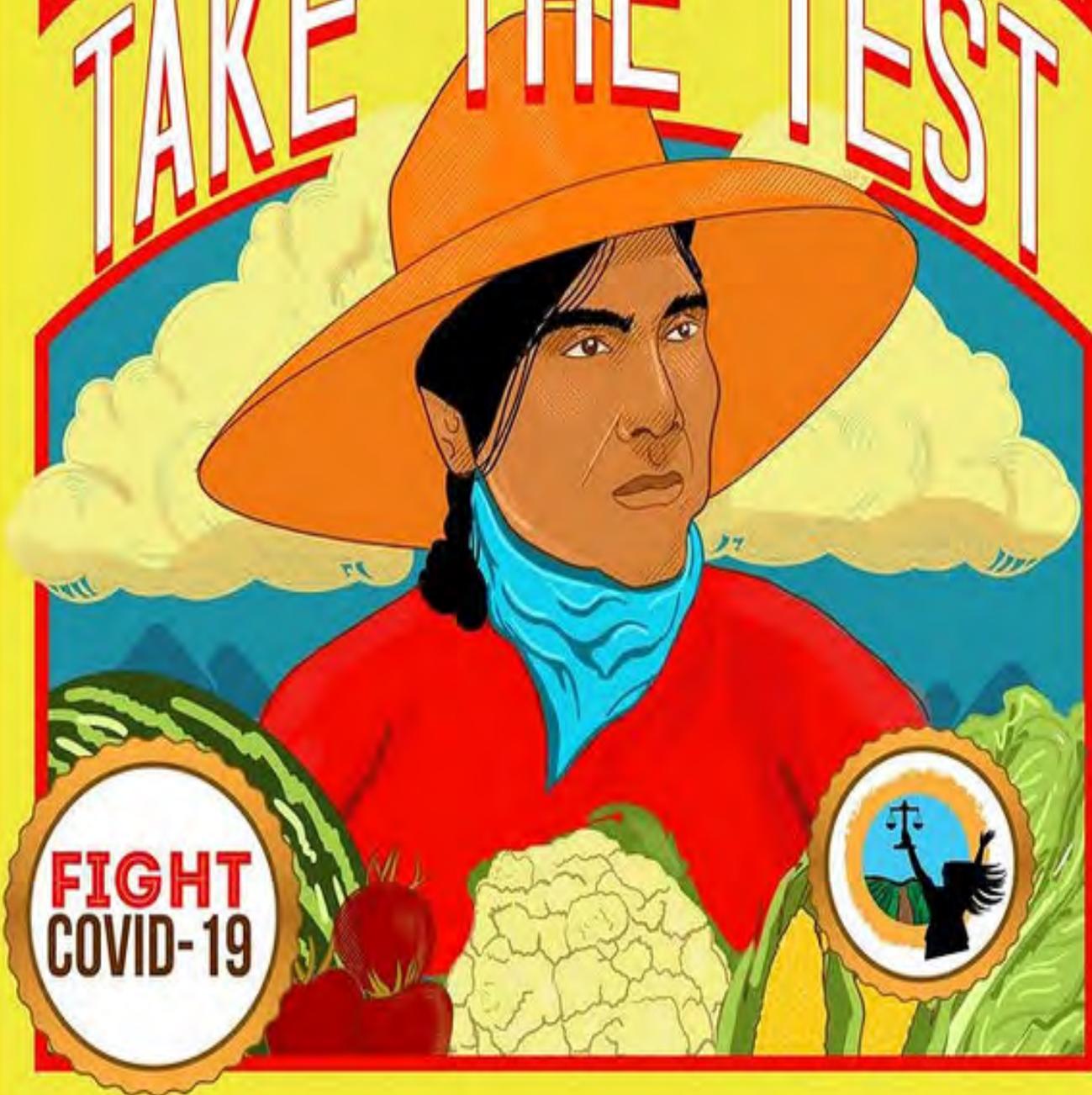
February 4, 2020 · 🌐



Dr. Hector Garcia - American GI Forum with President Lyndon B. Johnson

**FOR YOUR COMMUNITY**

**TAKE THE TEST**



**FIGHT  
COVID-19**





## American GI Forum-Miguel Hernandez Jr., Memorial Chapter, San Antonio Texas

March 30, 2016 -



### USNS CESAR CHAVEZ (T-AKE 14)

Jose Francisco Garcia updated his cover photo.

March 29, 2016

Cesar Chavez, spent a lifetime reaching for opportunity...he was possibly the greatest role model a Chicano could have ever had serving as a son, brother, father and husband....he was a patriot, a selfless activists, an adviser to the high born....Cesar started a civil rights movement that involved all races and creeds...that opened the gates for thousands of European 2nd and 3rd generation immigrants to become involved in boycott activity in the 60's and 70's.....yes, he had his faults and made, sometimes incalculable mistakes...but Cesar was always his own man, a driven man who was quickly recruited into the rank of Arch-Angel.....too quickly



**American GI Forum-Miguel Hernandez Jr., Memorial Chapter, San Antonio Texas** is 😊 feeling excited at Circus Bingo Play-Mor.

December 17, 2016 · San Antonio · 🌐

Families who signed up to receive gifts along with a turkey and all the trimmings for xmas dinner are arriving! 🥰👨👩👧👦

American GI Forum  
Miguel Hernandez Chapter





## American GI Forum-Miguel Hernandez Jr., Memorial Chapter, San Antonio Texas

July 31, 2019 · 🌐



NBCNEWS.COM

**Remembering Gus Garcia, Mexican-American civil rights pioneer**



**Lil Miss Mexico pageant  
AGIF  
Detroit youth activity neighborhood  
Latino Culture**



**AGIF Detroit Youth March  
in Remembrance of Nine Eleven**



**AGIF  
Detroit Youth Car Wash Fundraisers**



**AGIF Detroit Youth Help Decorate  
and participate  
in Detroit Cinco de Mayo parade**



# American G.I. Forum

*"Education is our Freedom and Freedom  
Should be Everybody's Business"*

Hi Ch Denver CO

GI Forum Women working the Cinco de Mayo in Denver for Scholarships to our Latino Students



Former AGIF commanders with Cid Wilson from HACR