

In Their Own Words...

A Not-So-Hidden Agenda

BY LEON KOLANKIEWICZ

The exchange below took place on April 14, 2013, on the Spanish-language channel *Univision* between Mexican-American actor and activist Edward James Olmos and Mexican immigrant (and now U.S. citizen) journalist Jorge Ramos, host of the Sunday morning news talk show *Al Punto* (To the Point). Leon Kolankiewicz translated it. Check it out for yourself at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L7qWwQi_34s.

Jorge Ramos: We [Latinos] are 17 percent of the population, but we have 3 [U.S.] senators, nothing more.

Edward James Olmos: That's right. And that's the problem. And that's going to change. Everything is going to change. It's going to change...but they're afraid of us.

Ramos: Why are they afraid of us?

Olmos: Because we have a lot of political strength. We have a lot of strength in that there are many of us and there will be many more of us. In 25 years, forget it....

Ramos: If the African Americans, who are less [numerous] than Hispanics, have already had their first president, do you believe we're close to having the first Hispanic president?

Olmos: Yes. Very close....

Olmos is a well-known actor and activist of long standing. Ramos is arguably the most visible Latino TV journalist in Spanish-language television, not only in the United States, but the western hemisphere.

After Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans

in 2005, forcing the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of residents, then-Mayor Ray Negin took a lot of flak for expressing dismay that many of the people moving into the city and settling there during reconstruction were not the same black residents who'd fled. He was ridiculed and raked over the coals for saying that he wanted to see New Orleans remain a "chocolate city" (i.e., majority African American).

Yet here are two famous, rich Mexican Americans gloating, in essence, at what they see as their own tribe, their team, well on its way to dominating the United States, and no prominent talking heads take them to task for it. In the Western hemisphere, demographically and politically, Spanish-speaking Latinos are dominant in Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Argentina, 16 countries in all.

But Olmos and Ramos will apparently not be content until Latinos are dominant in the U.S. as well. It's Manifest Destiny redux, but I thought that kind of petty ethnic chauvinism belonged to the nineteenth century. This is more than just *la Reconquista* (re-conquest) or irredentism, because they hunger to lord over the entire country, not just those portions of it which once belonged to Mexico.

Olmos has a chip on his shoulder the size of a log towards those he regards as the historic and current antagonists and persecutors of Mexicans and Mexican Americans.

I myself am Polish American, an immigrant group that has historically faced more than its fair share of bigotry—and not all that long ago either. As a kid growing up in the sixties and seventies, I remember being confused and hurt by the demeaning "Polack" jokes that were all the rage then. Poles and Polish Americans were singled out and belittled as stupid and cheap.

Q: How many Polacks does it take to change a light bulb?

A: Three. One to hold the light bulb and two to spin the ladder.

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Maybe I was an unduly sensitive, insecure 14-year old who “couldn’t take a joke” (or five jokes, or ten—there were many). Or maybe those fellow Polish Americans I heard laughing at these jokes or even telling them were self-hating types who wanted so badly to be accepted by—and fit into—mainstream culture that they were willing to wallow in self-abasement. Hard to say.

In any case, unlike Olmos, I don’t recall ever identifying with my own group above all else, or of feeling greater loyalty to or affinity with my own tribe than to my own country, warts and all. I didn’t rejoice that the Polish-American percentage of the population, and thus our clout in this society, was increasing due to immigration from Poland and higher birth rates among this largely Catholic group.

It doesn’t bother me all that much that not only has there never been a Polish-American president, nor any president whose ancestors hail from any eastern or

southern European country. African Americans beat us to the prize, and that’s fine, especially given their longer, far more tragic history in America.

What does bother me is to hear two privileged but resentful men crow about their ethnic group’s progress in terms of “us versus them.”

In addressing overpopulation on all scales—national and worldwide—one of the greatest obstacles is precisely the burning tribal loyalty expressed by Olmos and Ramos. In a number of countries and regions, members of a given ethnic or linguistic group, or clan, religious sect, or race, fervently embrace the numeric growth of their own group vis-à-vis others as a source of greater economic, political, and cultural power.

Our ability to stabilize population depends on a more expansive, inclusive vision, trust, and goodwill than displayed by either of these two gentlemen. Many Hispanics have this; they lack it. ■

REFUGEES BY THE NUMBERS

Over 3,000,000 “Refugees” have arrived in the United States since 1975.

Here are some statistical highlights about the “refugees” that have been resettled in the U.S. since 1975:

- **The number of refugees arriving in the U.S. topped the 3,000,000 mark on February 15, 2011.**
- **Over 1.4 million refugees have come from South East Asia.**
- **Over 605,000 have come from the former Soviet Union.**
- **Over 262,000 Africans have come to the U.S.**
- **Over 290,000 have come from countries in the Near East and South Asia.**
- **The five leading nationalities resettled here are Vietnamese, Ukrainians, Iraqis, Cubans, and Somalis.**
- **The five states that have received the most refugees, in descending order, are California, New York, Texas, Washington, and Florida.**



[Source: “Three Million: Changing Lives One Refugee at a Time,” Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, U.S. Department of State, 21 February 2012, e-letter from David M. Robinson, Acting Assistant Secretary]

—Wayne Lutton