

Hispanic Business Magazine profiles FMCRC Chair Al Pina

The FMCRC Bank of America Florida Boycott Planning Committee congratulate FMCRC Chair Al Pina on the following national profile

HispanicBusiness.com

Al Pina Fights For Nonprofits, Minority Communities

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Joshua Molina--HispanicBusiness.com



FMCRC's Al Pina collaborates with Liberty City Trust's Elaine Black to help promote minority economic development.

[Al Pina](#) doesn't spend a lot of time worrying about what others think of him. In fact, it's quite the contrary.

Pina, a 46-year-old retired United States Air Force veteran, actually thrives on, and enjoys, getting under people's skins.

"I was inspired by Robert Kennedy and how he stood up to the Mafia," Pina said. "He stood up to the bullies. I like anybody who stands up to bullies."

The Florida resident is finding out what it's like to challenge powerful organizations. As chairman of the [Florida Minority Community Reinvestment Coalition](#), which in 2007 had a \$204,000 budget, Pina has emerged as a formidable player in the worlds of politics, social justice and minority advocacy.

He most recently sparked controversy over his attempts to get large foundations in Florida to give more to nonprofit organizations that focus on low-income and minority communities. His goal is to help minorities buy small businesses, buy homes and make advancements in education. Lately, he's been putting pressure on banks, including Bank of America, to boost their lending to minority families and businesses.

His Florida group works closely with the San Francisco Bay Area's Greenlining Institute. The institute, working with California Assemblyman Joe Coto, brokered a deal with the state's largest foundations to set

aside \$30 million to fund Hispanic-run nonprofit organizations.

"He does not give up," Orson Aguilar, executive director of the Greenlining Institute, said of Pina. "He is clearly a fighter for social justice. He will not give up until there is a good compromise, until there is a benefit for communities that he advocates for."

Pina's work in Florida has earned him scorn among business advocates and even the Wall Street Journal. The conservative editorial page suggested he was committing "racial extortion."

For the soft-spoken, but intense Pina, being in the eye of the storm is a role he's totally comfortable with.

Raised by a single mother in Phoenix, Pina said people like Kennedy and labor organizer Cesar Chavez were his idols. Pina talked back to teachers and was never shy in challenging their authority.

When a teacher tried to kick him out of class once, after a testy exchange between the two, Pina refused to leave. The police had to be called in. He walked out of class two hours later, on his own terms.

At one point in high school he even passed around a petition to impeach the principal.

After high school Pina joined the Air Force, where he served for six years. After he left the military, Pina got tangled up in corporate America, working in key sales management positions at PepsiCo and Phillip Morris.

"I was living the good life," Pina recalled. "I thought I had the riches in the world because I had a nice car, I was going to the Super Bowl, I was playing golf three times a week."

But the good life crashed down on him. While still in his 30s, he fell ill from a serious stomach disease. He needed emergency reconstructive stomach surgery. In the hospital room, Pina had somewhat of a rebirth.

"My aunts started to pray for me while I was in the operating room," he recalled.

After the surgery, Pina said he had a greater appreciation of life, and an understanding of what matters.

"I wasn't contributing to the construction of humanity," Pina said.

After his spiritual awakening, Pina started to advocate and raise money for minority communities. He started slowly, networking locally in Phoenix, then picked up steam, heading all the way to Washington, D.C. and eventually Florida, where he started his organization.

Now Pina is center stage, battling banks and foundations.

"When I see the way these communities are going, and I see these incredible injustices, it really angers me," said Pina, who has two daughters. "I am going to do the right thing regardless of the consequences."

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