



*Florida Minority Community Reinvestment Coalition
Baltimore Minority Community Reinvestment Coalition*

EDITORIAL:

United States Senator John McCain Helps Us
Racially Integrate Phoenix AZ in 90s

Aids in Getting City Council to Vote For
Cesar Chavez Plaza in heart of Downtown Phoenix

Present Day: Senator McCain Saves Millions of Lives By
Saving Healthcare for the Poor

**My Story of U.S. Senator John McCain On
Helping Us Bring Racial & Economic Integration To
Phoenix in the 90s That Builds Up Our Nation's Ability to Compete**

FMCRC Chair Al Pina:

Senator McCain continues to be an American I admire and trust. I started in the 90s in Phoenix Arizona. As a point, I am a registered Independent. I don't embrace a political party, I embrace the United States of America. Before I personally met Senator McCain, I heard of him through a commander I worked for in the United States Air Force who like Senator McCain, was a prisoner of war at the infamous Hanoi Hilton during the Vietnam War.

After the death of Cesar Chavez, a hero to most Mexicans and Mexican Americans, I saw an opportunity to not only honor our hero, but to bring racial integration to Phoenix that had a history of racial segregation during the 90s and before. You see, I believed then as I believe now....that America will never be able to compete and lead in the growing global economy if we did not have a racially and economically inclusive nation that would allow minorities become significant contributors to the economy (both in productivity and consumption). I saw this in the United States Air Force and military that was significantly racially integrated that allowed people of all races work together to protect our nation. From Generals to privates, minorities have helped our military become the single most powerful military in the world. We can do the same with our economy if we bring both racial and economic integration to all major cities. Remember, every single world dominating power has fallen in the history of the world. If we do not bring full racial economic inclusion into our nation we are at risk to a global economy.

So it begins with racial social integration. To start this in Phoenix, I wanted to erect a monument and plaza in the heart of Phoenix Arizona named after Cesar Chavez. During the 90s this was controversial so it would not be an easy task. Little did I know our greatest obstacle would be 2 Latino democrat elected officials who ran politics like a mafia. I put forth the idea of having a plaza named after Cesar Chavez with several Young Turk activists like myself (back then we were young). They all agreed that we would pursue this opportunity to bring racial integration to Phoenix.

We met with one of the 2 Latino democrat elected officials who was a city councilmember to get his support for this monument. I attended the meeting with a mentor (Art Othon) who used to be the chief of staff for Democratic Governor Bruce Babbitt. In short the meeting got ugly. The city council member and the husband of the second Latino political mobster told me it was none of my business and I better do what they want. Anyone who knows me.....there is nobody on this planet that can intimidate me. I answer to God only. So I lashed back at them and told them they kiss my rear and I would move forward with it anyway. Because what we wanted was good for our city and country.

But I knew little about politics and learned soon it could be very sneaky. We were able to get on the Phoenix city council agenda a vote to erect a plaza across the street from City hall named the "Cesar Chavez Plaza". We packed full the city council chambers and I was sure we would get the votes to make this a reality. Oh how I was wrong. I was asked to speak on behalf of the agenda item of erecting the "Cesar Chavez Plaza". I spoke on the need to bring racial inclusion to Phoenix and to have symbols like the "Cesar Chavez Plaza" to bring such racial inclusion that builds up our nation. I asked packed city council chamber audience do they support this measure...the chamber erupted with applause and yes. I was certain we would win the vote and the City of Phoenix would see the beginning of symbolic racial integration. So Mayor Paul Johnson asked for a vote...the Latino city council member (to this day I refuse to say his name) spoke and said he would not support this measure. And the mostly other republican council

members were following him. The mostly all white council did not want a Cesar Chavez plaza in downtown and used this Latino council member to do their dirty work. I saw a defeat coming and I wanted to cry....but a “GREAT” American and the only African American on the city council (and highly respected Calvin Goode) spoke and stated how let’s vote on this agenda item now because there we many more questions that needed to be answered. The Mayor agreed and they tabled the agenda item to name the park in the heart of the city the “Cesar Chavez Plaza”. It was certainly going to be defeated so I was pleased to have it tabled.

After the city council voted to have the agenda item tabled something happened that would change my life forever. Council member Calvin Goode called me over to speak to me. He told me to learn how politics are played and that the Latino council member had gotten the votes to defeat our Cesar Chavez Plaza before this meeting and I better learn how to play this game to get this approved because he thought it was the right thing to do. He suggested I go to one of the 2 Republican Arizona U.S. Senators to persuade the Republican city council members to vote yes. Right away I thought of Senator John McCain who I heard of so much from my Commander.

I asked my mentor Art Othon (remember a past Chief of Staff for a Democratic AZ Governor) if he knew Senator McCain and could he get us an audience. He said yes and we would have to fly to D.C. to meet with him. Soon after we flew to Washington D.C. to meet

Unites States Senator John McCain and discuss the “Cesar Chavez Plaza” in Phoenix and how that would be good for Phoenix, Arizona and America. But I must admit I was just as excited to meet a hero to most Veterans like myself. We all know of this great American and I was also blessed to have worked for a fellow prison of war who taught me humility.

This was my first trip to Washington D.C. and it was so overwhelming to me. My heart pounding out of my chest we came to Senator John McCain’s office and were escorted into a private office. As we waited for Senator McCain my heart was pounding so hard I thought I would faint. Then I heard the door opening and walked in this American and I was immediately in awe of his presence. Immediately my military service took over and I called him “Sir” but he told me no need to call him “Sir” so I called him Senator McCain. Knowing his schedule was tight we went right into the purpose of the meeting. First off I was so proud to see a Democrat and Republican talk together about building a stronger Arizona and country. After we presented our case, Senator McCain told us what we wanted with this “Cesar Chavez Plaza” in the heart of Phoenix was the “right thing to do” and he would make phone calls to help our efforts. As quick as that. The meeting only lasted about 20 minutes but it was one of the best 20 minutes of my life. For I witnessed Americans on different sides of the political aisle agree that racial and economic integration was good for America.

Soon after that meeting I was called and told the agenda item to name the small park in the middle of the city the “Cesar Chavez Plaza” was back on the agenda to be voted on. Wow...is all I could think. The City Council voted to approve the building of the “Cesar Chavez Plaza” and the road to racial integration truly began in Phoenix.

Months later, I was called by Art Othon that there was going to be a formal ribbon cutting for the “Cesar Chavez Plaza” and I would not be invited. That the very Latino Democrats who opposed us to erect the “Cesar Chavez Plaza” in the heart of the city were taking control of this ribbon cutting and made sure I was not invited. He asked me if I was angry because I was the person who made this happen and yet I was not invited. I chuckled...and told him I was not upset because what we did was not for credit or fame...we did this because I understand how racial integration is critical for our country’s future. That matters not credit. But I also know most people would not ever know that Senator John McCain made this possible and for this I will always be grateful to Senator McCain.

On a side note...remember Council member Calvin Goode who saved the “Cesar Chavez Plaza” from initial defeat...well God rewarded him for his righteousness. After his death the main city of Phoenix building right next to the “Cesar Chavez Plaza” was named the Calvin Goode Building. Now in the heart of the city...2 symbols (Cesar Chavez Plaza and Calvin Goode Building) for Latino and African American children that tells them “they belong and they are important to our country”. This feeling that they belong and important to the United States of America gives them hope

and will give them emotional and spiritual fuel to work hard and help us all build a nation that will be the world leader for all times.

We start with racial integration that must lead to economic inclusion to ensure our nation's survival forever. Unites States Senator John McCain showed me back then during this Cesar Chavez Plaza struggle and last week voting to ensure the poor have health insurance (that the ability to not suffer is not an American privilege) that he is a great American and will always be my hero. God Bless you Senator (or Sir) McCain.

So to those who are upset that I focus on Race I hope this story helps you understand that what we must focus on race to racially and economically integrate America and by doing so we will ensure that the United States of America does not follow the path of every leading civilization in the history of the world and fall. A Brookings Institute study found that minorities in every major urban city account for 43% of those cities population yet contribute on average less than 5% of those cities GDP. By focusing on race we will bring racial and economic inclusion to America. By doing so America will remain the leading super power forever by having minorities become greater contributors to our economic fabric and stability.

"There are those who say thus is the way of the world....I say NO thus we make it"

"It is easy to sing when one sits upon a perch of privilege as compared to those who are drowning in a sea of neglect"

Al Pina

Chair/CEO

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