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**WOMEN IN
BUSINESS**



If we are going to change things, we've got to take the initiative ourselves. We've got to look within ourselves and within our own communities for the answers, instead of looking to Washington or Austin.

Rita Clements, Texas First Lady

SAN ANTONIO'S BOLD WELFARE INITIATIVE

Welfare is a drag. No place to be. It's poverty. Two, three-year old kids running around a project apartment, without bottoms or tops, crying and carrying on desperately. Everything is unkempt: The kitchen, bedrooms, bottles of pop and fast food goodies are scattered about, the TV's picture is rolling aimlessly, and the woman head of this household of four (3 children, one woman adult) is madder than a hatter because she's got nothing to do. There's a rage building up inside of her and the kids, but she can't do anything about it. It's all so pointless. She's trapped. She can't work. Her self-respect is shattered. She's unskilled. Why do anything? Why not mellow out with some pills or wine? That's the welfare trap.

But hold on. Somebody is doing something about it. In San Antonio, Texas an unusual alliance of hardcore private enterprise businessmen and a federally- and city-supported model welfare reform project has produced a realistic and spreading alternative to the welfare trap.

The Road to NWEI Inc.

The story begins with Lupe Anguiano, founder and president of the National Women's Employment and Education Inc. (NWEI). Anguiano has been at the forefront of every major social battle waged by Hispanics in the last 15 years. In the 1960s, she spread the word of *la causa* to the industrial centers of the country, and was a principal architect, though this is not widely known, of the Bilingual-Bicultural Education Act of 1968. In 1971, she joined the

historic DHEW Women's Task Force, an experience which triggered her commitment to reform the A.F.D.C. (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) Welfare Program. The Women's Task Force, which included Gloria Steinem, Bella Abzug and Betty Friedan, led to the founding of the National Women's Political Caucus, of which Anguiano was a founding member.

The first decisive step in the 7-year effort to produce "a realistic alternative" to the welfare trap began with the "Let's Get Off Welfare Campaign" launched in San Antonio in November 1973. At the time, Anguiano was serving as Regional Director for the Southwest Regional Office for the Spanish-Speaking (SWROSS) of the National Council of Catholic Bishops. By then, she was well aware of the dynamics of being on welfare. In Washington, D.C. she had analyzed the legislation and examined the program guidelines and procedures of the A.F.D.C. Welfare Program, by far the most controversial and costly part of the overall federal welfare package. Once in San Antonio, she sought direct contact with the other end of the welfare spectrum. An organizer pretty much acts and functions as an entrepreneur. If you're starting-up a business to produce a product or a service, you first analyze your market. Anguiano lived with the women on welfare in the projects for six months and spent countless hours with them so that she could observe and understand the experience. She recalls:

The first pinch of poverty I experienced was running out of food after

the third week of the month (in Texas a woman with a family of four on A.F.D.C. receives \$140.00 each month). I often accompanied the women on a visit to the doctor, to a food stamp office or on a visit to the Department of Public Welfare. Finding transportation was the first problem. Having very little or no money, but trying to find a baby sitter to stay with the younger children or having someone stay at home to wait for the children when they came home from school was another problem. Trying to deal with attorneys who insisted that the woman should know where the father of her children lived — and the woman fearing a beating by the husband if she did tell where he could be found even if she knew was another problem.

At the projects Anguiano confirmed everything she had suspected. While the A.F.D.C. program consumed incredibly high administrative costs, in some cases up to 75 percent, it yielded minimum benefit-value to welfare recipients. She found the women (many minority, Hispanic women) were young, wanted to learn, wanted to work, but the welfare program confronted them with disincentives. If they worked, they were penalized by having their meager welfare checks decreased in value. They received no incentives to work, and no job-training or educational assistance. Lupe Anguiano observed in the field that the application of welfare guidelines served only to perpetuate a frustrating cycle of "economic

and psychological dependency." She also knew that the system was fundamentally discriminatory toward low-income women inasmuch as more than 90 percent of all families receiving A.F.D.C. welfare assistance, three and a half million in the country, were headed by women, many of them minority women.

The "Let's Get Off Welfare Campaign" of November 1973 produced two

powerful Democrat, represents the district in Washington, D.C. The point: Mexican Americans exercise public influence in San Antonio virtually to the same degree that Cuban Americans do in Miami.

Meanwhile, the Chamber of Commerce is busy marketing the private sector virtues of the city to the nation's industrial interests. At the same time, it has also taken the extraordinary step of

Unidas with its "Let's Get Off Welfare Campaign" in 1973. Ever since the first business person responded — individuals like Cappy Lawton of the 1776 Corporation, Philip Parker of Houston Bridge & Engineering Company, Bill Hudson of Alamo National Bank, John Sackett of Alamo Iron Works, Ofelia Garza of Central Office Supply — an alliance has evolved between the business community, the Chamber of Commerce and Lupe Anguiano's efforts to reform A.F.D.C. welfare.

Anguiano's basic principles are simple. She says, "75 percent of all women on welfare are young, healthy, intelligent women who would select a job over welfare if a job were offered to them. What keeps them off the job market and on welfare," Anguiano explains matter-of-factly, "are basic practical things like: lack of employment or job information, lack of job training, of child care and of transportation." Providing such services is what NWEE is all about. "Usually," says Lupe Anguiano, "it takes a woman about a year to adjust to the world of work."

In 1977, Anguiano got the Texas Legislature to support a Texas A.F.D.C. Welfare Reform Program to be patterned after the successful San Antonio model. But the Texas Department of Public Welfare, charged with implementing the law, refused to develop the state effort after the San Antonio experience, and

"What keeps them off the job market are practical things like lack of job information, job training, child care . . ."

solid results. First, 500 women left the A.F.D.C. welfare assistance program within a six-month period for job opportunities found for them by "Mujeres Unidas" (United Women). "Mujeres Unidas," a SWROSS church-supported program, created the "Low Income Women's Employment Model Project," predecessor of NWEE. Another crucial outcome of the Campaign, entirely unexpected, was the response of the San Antonio Kiwanis Club and local business community.

Forging the Private Sector Connection

San Antonio, some local businessmen like to say, is the sunbelt's "best kept secret." While Houston and Dallas are rocking and rolling with high-growth business, San Antonio's economy remains tied, at least in the public's eye, to its military bases and the tourist trade. But the picture is changing.

According to Cliff Terrell, Executive VP with the San Antonio Chamber of Commerce, the local business community has been taking a new, more aggressive posture of late toward attracting new, clean industries to the city. The Economic Development Council, presently headed by John D. Sackett, Executive VP of Alamo Iron Works, and the Economic Development Foundation, both action arms of the Chamber, are pursuing busy agendas. Response to a full-page ad campaign featuring an upbeat "United San Antonio" image in the *Wall Street Journal*, has produced good results.

The city is changing in other ways too. Four Mexican Americans sit on an eleven-person city council, which includes Mayor Lila Cockrell. A large cross-section of San Antonians believe Henry Cisneros, who sits on the Council, has a good chance of being mayor of the city. San Antonio's influential Catholic population is guided by the popular and socially-conscious Archbishop Patricio Flores. The popular Congressman Henry B. González, a

adopting a resolution agreeing to establish an Employer's Task Force to advise NWEE Inc. in acquiring private sector financing and assistance in order to be free of federal regulations which impede its effectiveness. The upshot of such an innovative proposal suggests at least a partial no-cost welfare reform script to the taxpayers.

The National Women's Employment and Education, Inc. (NWEE), incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation in 1979, is the direct product of a 6-year experience launched by the Mujeres



Bill Hudson and John Sackett of the San Antonio Chamber of Commerce with Lupe Anguiano