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## Interview no. 279

Magdaleno Cisneros

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO  
INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Magdaleno Cisneros (1949- )  
INTERVIEWER: Luis López  
PROJECT: Class Project  
DATE OF INTERVIEW: November 26, 1976  
TERMS OF USE: Unrestricted  
  
TAPE NO.: 279  
TRANSCRIPT NO.: 279  
TRANSCRIBER: Luis López  
DATE TRANSCRIBED: December 15, 1976

BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

(Former Raza Unida candidate) Mr. Cisneros was born in El Paso, Texas on July 23, 1949. He attended local schools, Aoy and Hart Elementary, then he went on to Bowie High School where he graduated in 1969. With the help of the Upward Bound Program and the Mexican-American Youth Association, Mr. Cisneros attended Colorado State University for one quarter semester and then transferred to UTEP. At this university, Mr. Cisneros received his B.A. degree in Political Science in 1973.

Mr. Cisneros ran for Justice of the Peace with La Raza Unida Party in El Paso County in 1974.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Political involvement; the Chicano community and politics; illegal aliens.

1 hour, 18 pages

/This is an interview with Mr. Magdaleno Cisneros by Mr. Luis López at 5832 Mainzer, El Paso, Texas, November 26, 1976./

L: Mr. Cisneros, why did you become involved in politics?

C: My involvement in politics was mostly an outgrowth of my involvement in the Chicano Movement, with M.A.Y.A., and /other/ organizations whose goals are bettering the Chicano. My interest in politics was aroused at a very young age, during the Presidential campaign of John F. Kennedy. When he first ran for President in 1960, I became really interested in politics. As time went by, I started to play a more active role in community politics, such as organizing groups, mostly in South El Paso, for campaigns at the local and state levels. As far as we could determine, we were very influential in several elections.

L: What party interest or office did you want to represent?

C: Let me make a little clarification here. In 1974 I ran for Justice of the Peace under La Raza Unida Party. My precinct was Precinct Three of El Paso County. However, the main purpose for running was not so much for getting elected as it was to get the party on the ballot for the first time. Our goals were primarily to set up a county-wide network of electoral judges to provide assistance for election of a third party--if you want to call it a third party. We like to think that we were only a second party rather than a third; 'cause if you are aware of Texas politics, there is only one major party in Texas--the Democratic /Party/. La Raza Unida sought to give the Democrats more competition in order to make them more responsive to the needs of the Chicano.

As for my interest in the office, it was mostly chosen at random. We needed candidates to run in different positions, and that position seemed to be the most logical one /for me/, given my time for campaigning and my financial resources.

L: Did you have any help, other than the Raza Unida helping you financially?

C: La Raza Unida did not help us financially. As a matter of fact, we had to help the Raza Unida. Whatever funds we had, we'd get to keep some for ourselves. And if we had any left, we would contribute them to the state party, the state headquarters. We did get a lot of support from the community, the people, especially in the Chicano barrios. They were not big contributions, but they were in a way real significant. Some people would provide their home for coffee shops to have discussions, others would provide labor for painting signs, posters. Others donated their services such as going and campaigning, working the precincts during election day or whatever. There was a lot of community participation and involvement.

L: In the election of 1972, Bowie High School, which is located in the southside, had a very low voter turnout. Can you explain this action?

C: Traditionally, the Chicano has been under-represented in the voter registration list. You probably are aware that we make up only about 38 percent of the registered voters; however, compare that to the population which is primarily Mexican-American of Spanish surnamed (who are the majority), that's a difference of about 20 percent. For some reason, the Mexican-Americans or Chicanos tend to be less active in politics; some don't even go out to get registered to vote. It was not until the late 1960s when the voter registration campaigns were started that a lot of Mexican-Americans got registered for the first time.

It is commonly known that here in El Paso, South El Paso is an indicator of the Chicano vote. One might say, "As South El Paso goes, so goes the Chicano vote in El Paso." As for the low turnout, it was probably because La Raza Unida was just getting started, and there was

not too much local interest in the elections. As local interest develops or heightens, we get more participation in areas like South El Paso. I think right now the precinct headquarters in Alamo Elementary School.

For example, if two Mexican-American candidates are opposing each other, they will get a lot of Mexican-American votes out. If a Mexican-American candidate is running against an Anglo, that will produce a lot of Mexican-American turnout in such precincts as the one covered by Bowie in 1972.

L: When you mentioned two Chicanos running against each other, I would assume that you are referring to Representatives Moreno and Santiesteban?

C: Yes. I had an opportunity to play a fairly active role in that campaign, even though I was on the losing side. But there was a lot of interest and participation by a lot of people on both sides. It was quite a heated campaign.

L: You stated that you were more or less picked to represent the particular office you mentioned already. What were some of the important issues that you were trying to see changed?

C: Like I said, there were a lot of issues. Prior to the election of '74, there was a lot of problems with the Justices of the Peace, as far as them not showing up when they were supposed to, being available when the officers needed them. One of my points was that I would propose that a J.P. would be available at the time when they are needed, that a system of rotation of hours be set up where at least one J.P. would be available at all times in case of an emergency or if a police needed them for warrants, summons, whatever. Also, the rulings of most of the J.P.'s in the past have been anti-Chicano. For some reason,

'cause there are no records kept of the proceedings, Chicanos find it very difficult to get justice in these courts. If a Chicano was arrested and had to go before a Justice of the Peace, he would have a very hard time proving himself innocent even if he was innocent. For some reason local judges tend to favor the police officer regardless of what the police officer is saying. The judges tend to believe the police officer more than the person.

- L: There was a big issue on those three persons that threw the fire bomb at the Popular Dry Goods Company downtown August 6, 1976. Could this be an example of the issues that you were trying to change, where the men were not represented according to the law?
- C: No, certainly not, because their trial was held in a State Court. And they did have the opportunity for good legal representation, for legal counsel. What I meant was mostly petty offenses like being picked up for jay walking or drunkenness or disturbing the peace, which is very popular with the police officers here. If they have no other charge, they'll charge them with disturbing the peace, especially if it's a youthful defendant. If he goes before a Justice of the Peace, whatever the police officer says, that goes. The defendant may have just come out of his house, but if the police officer says he was disturbing the peace, he will be fined or found guilty of disturbing the peace.
- L: When you refer to police officers, are you referring to Anglo, Chicano and Black officers?
- C: Unfortunately, "police officer" does cover all, when we're talking about police officers or police harassment, police brutality, if you want to call it that. In South El Paso, it is not limited to the Anglo police officers. Sometimes it the Chicano police officer, Mexican-American,

Spanish surname (whatever you want to call him) /that/ is just as brutal and harsh with the Mexican people as would be the Anglo or would be the Black.

L: Could you give a small reason why the Chicano policeman would stereotype his fellow man in his behavior? Is he trying to get ahead or is he trying to represent the white image?

C: I do not know. I do not have facts or studies that are at my disposal. What I do have is mostly opinions. And my personal opinion is that it has to do a lot with the hiring of these police officers. Some of these police officers come from the barrios, not from South El Paso itself, but similar barrios. Here I'm talking about Mexican-American police officers. They tend to think in terms of gangs still. They think that if you're from South El Paso, San Juan, of Smelter Town, you belong to a gang. And if they're from San Juan they'll have a very harsh view of people in South El Paso. And if they're from Smelter Town, they'll have a harsh view of San Juan and South El Paso; and vice versa. I would say it's a lack of education on the part of the police officer, /which/ causes him to be brutal or lack understanding of problems in different Chicano communities.

L: Since we are a border city, would you reflect this same picture in Juárez, México--lack of education--on the part of the policemen, and the same type of justice?

C: I am not really qualified to talk about México, but I would say, yes, lack of education would be very important in terms of determining the behavior of police officers and other officials of México. Also, their greed for money sometimes drives them to do things that otherwise would not be done, taking all other things into consideration.

L: Who were your opponents when you ran for Justice of the Peace?

C: My opponent was just one person, Jesús Hernández, who is the current J.P. for Precinct Three in the County of El Paso.

L: Was he equally or better qualified than you were?

C: I'd like to say, I believe that I was better qualified than he was; however, he did have an established party behind him, national party, if you will. He ran with a very popular person, Richard Telles, who I believe coat-tailed him into office. By virtue of Richard Telles' victory, Hernández rode his coat-tail, as politicians call it.

L: What percentage vote did you receive after the election?

C: In my position, the percentage of the vote was 22 percent for La Raza Unida and 70 percent for the Democrats.

L: Do you believe that the 22 percent had an impact on the way that people are beginning to realize that the Democratic Party or the Republican Party are not going all out to help La Raza? Did the 22 percent have an impact on the voter registration?

C: The 22 percent was significant in that it did symbolize that there was a significant amount of discontent with the Democrats, the established party. I do not know that this reflects on the voter registration, but I do feel that there is a need for change in attitudes of people in the major parties, at least towards the Chicano. For too long a time the Democrats have looked upon the Chicanos as a sure vote. If they can get the other minorities to vote, and other groups--labor, for example--on their side, they have won the election. But they never think of having to convince the Chicano vote to vote Democrat, 'cause they always feel that the Chicano is a Democratic voter. If you're a Chicano, you're for the Democrats, regardless. I think this has to not only change, but



that the Chicano has to make his position felt more; so that when it comes down to policy, we wouldn't just be taken for granted but would be accepted and recognized, [our] feelings and [our] needs [fulfilled] when it comes to distributing the goods, the spoils of victory.

- L: At what age level do Mexican-Americans first perceive the time to vote? Do you believe that people in their thirties, or low twenties, were getting out to vote, or was it older people?
- C: I do not know if there is any research or established data on the exact age [of the] Chicano [voter]. For the most part, it has been established on the general national bases that people between 30 and 60 tend to be more active or to go and vote more regularly. As for the Chicano, [he has] only been interested in elections where he could relate to one or two of the candidates. Lately I think this has started to change, especially with more Mexican-Americans being educated, more Mexican-Americans being able to speak more English fluently, being able to read and write. They have taken the time to go register, to go vote more regularly. So I think that as time changes, the age where the Chicanos get involved is being lowered.

There is a lot of youth involvement now in politics, both Chicano and Anglo. But Chicanos have really started to get into politics now. There was a lot of talk before this 1976 election about apathy, the lack of voter turnout, the lack of interest by minority groups. But as it turns out, especially in Chicano areas here in El Paso, the voter turnout was significantly high. Imagine, one of us, the South El Paso precinct, for the first time, I believe, [had] over 500 hundred turn out to vote. This is compared to about 300 at the most in previous elections. So there is more interest on the part of

the Chicano in politics. And I think this is partly due to becoming more educated, better able to understand politics, issues, candidates, and, over all, the election procedures.

L: Do you have an idea why Mexican-Americans have had little representation in politics?

C: Well, mostly because we lived in a nation of majority rule, if you want to call it that. As you know, we make up only about 5 percent of the total national population. When you transcribe that to power, it is very little power compared to the Anglo. As far as I know, there will be no Spanish surnames in the U.S. Senate, for example, after this election November 1976. There will be only a handful of Spanish surnamed persons in the House of Representatives. This has been true for a long time. Here in Texas we used to have one representative, Henry B. González (out of San Antonio, I believe), but that was about it. For some reason, the Chicano cannot put out a candidate that is acceptable to both Mexican-Americans and Anglos. I do believe there have been enough candidates to try for the positions, but they have not been able to get wide support.

At a local level here in El Paso, it is kind of a unique thing. We do have a lot of Mexican-Americans or Spanish surnamed individuals elected into office; however, most of the higher offices are held by Anglo-Americans who, as I have stated, are a minority here in the County of El Paso. For example, such offices as the office of the Mayor and the County Judge have traditionally been held by Anglo-Americans. As far as I know, there has been only one Spanish surnamed Mayor, Raymond Telles; but because of his unique role or his unique position in history and politics here in El Paso, he was unable to do much for the Chicano

as a whole.

L: You mentioned Mr. Telles' unique status. Can you please clarify this?

C: Like I said before, there has not been any Mexican-American, since or before him, that has been elected Mayor of the city of El Paso.

There have been a lot of candidates with real good programs who made real struggles to get elected, but at some point they came out short.

One candidate that comes into my mind is Mr. Héctor Bencomo. He has run a couple of times and come real close to winning, but not actually won. In the future maybe we will have more mayors with Spanish surnames, but right now we are still outnumbered.

L: A while ago you mentioned the Senate. I presume that you were referring to Senator Montoya of New Mexico.

C: Yes, precisely. For some reason, the people of New Mexico voted him out. New Mexico will have to pay dearly for that. You know, Mr. Montoya was not from my party, Democrats, but still he had a considerable amount of seniority in the Senate. This translates into programs for the districts and for the state. And even though Mr. Schmitt will be a very popular person (having been an astronaut), I do not believe that he will be able to get as many programs or federal monies for New Mexico as did Mr. Montoya.

L: Are you presently involved in any community action or organizations here in El Paso?

C: My involvement at the present time is limited to La Campaña Por la Salvación del Segundo Barrio. Our goals are to salvage what is left of the Segundo Barrio. I do not know if you are aware of it, but for the past two or three years there has been a plan to eradicate old

tenements. And the problem is, the residents of these tenements are Mexican-Americans with very little income. As early as 1964, we were asking or demanding, protesting, marching against the city officials for not enforcing housing codes or making the landlords improve the tenements. The response from the city officials was that it was very hard "under Texas law" to make the landlord fix or improve the tenements. Yet, in 1973, when we were in a very low or very serious economic depression nation wide, especially in South El Paso, the City Administration decided to enforce the city housing codes.

The response by the tenement landlords was to tear down the tenements. Instead of fixing them, they would give notice to the residents that they would be evicted because the tenement was going to be torn down. And this happened not only one time, but we had at least 140 tenements that were torn down this way. What resulted was a severe shortage of housing, not only in South El Paso, but, as I stated, in the nation, due to the economic crisis. There was an overall lack of public housing, especially one within the economic means of the people of South El Paso. So we had to try to stop the tearing down of what housing was available. Instead of tearing it down, we advocated the repair or improvement of such housing. We sought to bring in Federal programs, such as HUD, or at least more programs that could have been made available to areas such as South El Paso under the Community Development Act of 1974, which was signed by President Ford. However, we met a lot of resistance, partly because South El Paso is mainly a Mexican-American community and supposedly new laws were aimed at desegregating communities. That is, they did not want a concentration of a minority in one single area. And that created a problem in

bringing Federal programs to South El Paso.

[Another] problem was that at this time the price of land in South El Paso had risen so high that the land owners found it more profitable to sell to industrial and commercial interests rather than to build housing for rent or for their own private use in that area. So we ended up with South El Paso having over 300 commercial interests in that area. That is about three square miles. That is very difficult, because at one time South El Paso had a population of almost 19,000 in the same area, which was very dense for a single area in El Paso.

Now, I believe that the population has gone down to anywhere from 6,000 to 8,000. And what we are interested in is to provide low cost housing for people, Mexican-Americans primarily, in this area. There are three elementary schools, one junior high, and one high school, Bowie High School. There are three Roman Catholic churches real close [by], there are at least two other religious churches in the area. Traditionally, South El Paso has been a residential community. Many Mexican-Americans have found living in South El Paso very convenient due to the closeness of downtown El Paso and Juárez.

People with very low economic means could travel to Juárez and buy foodstuffs which are cheaper in México. They could travel to downtown without having to pay or use too much public transportation, which is very limited in El Paso. So it was very economically rewarding, you might say, to live in South El Paso. Some people have lived here not just 10 or 20 years, some have lived here for almost 80 years; these are the old people. And it is very hard for them to find their way around in different areas of town, as has been done with this public housing. They have been sent to Ysleta or Northeast El Paso. Both are about 13

miles away from downtown El Paso--a distribution that is not very feasible when you think of the changes. Also there were changes in environment that had to be adjusted to by the residents when they moved out of South El Paso. Whereas they were accustomed to going to the downtown stores, now they have to travel to shopping centers; or if they want to, they have to take long bus rides to come to South El Paso or downtown. Those that used to go to Juárez find it more difficult to go to Juárez and make their purchases there.

The problem rises and goes on as more people move out and industrial companies start to move in. And this makes it a lot more difficult for the people in South El Paso to get housing in South El Paso, primarily, because the United States is a country where money speaks, and most of these commercial interests have a lot of money which speaks very loudly. And the Mexican-Americans in South El Paso, as I stated, are very poor. So we do not have the resources sometimes to fight the court rulings or judges' decisions, or district courts or whatever, which sometimes could have been fought or could have been won if we had the means to fight them.

L: Was your support mainly concentrated by Mexican-Americans?

C: Are you referring to the election?

L: Yes. Were there any Anglos or Blacks backing you up?

C: I would have to say that the Raza Unida Party here in El Paso received mostly Mexican-American support. There may have been some Anglos. Looking at the returns by precincts, I noted that there were some precincts that have been high Anglo percentage and we did get pretty good turnouts out of those precincts. So there may have been some liberal votes for us from those precincts.

L: After the election, how did your party fare with the other parties?

C: In 1974, our party did pretty good compared to the other party. As a matter of fact, we did so good that... Let me go back. In Texas, there was a law that stated that a third party would have to get six percent of the general election vote in order to stay on the ballot for the next election. After the 1974 election, the state legislature, which is controlled by the Democratic Party, passed a law raising the six percent to 20 percent. They were afraid that if we kept going as we did, we might challenge them real seriously in the very near future.

And I do believe that the day will come when La Raza Unida will establish itself as a legitimate, very strong third party, or second party, if you will, here in the state of Texas.

L: So what you are saying is that you are planning to run again, if asked to do so in the future.

C: Not run. I do plan to be more involved in the strengthening of the party, but I do not believe that I will run for office again, personally.

L: Do you feel that Mexican-Americans are being represented equally in political issues on an even scale with other ethnic groups?

C: I do not believe that we are being represented equally. Because, to begin with, let me say this: our issues, our problems, are not the same as the other minorities' problems. There are similarities, let's say, with the Blacks, who are mostly poor also (this would be the Mexican worker). We also have a stigma or the label of being Spanish, primarily speaking Spanish, so that programs designed for Blacks may not always apply to the Chicano, and vice versa.

Or let me say this: the Chicano for the most part has been getting leftovers from the Black programs. That is, such programs as Project Bravo and all those things were primarily designed for Black communities. And the result has been, what's leftover was turned over for Mexican-Americans and other minorities. This has not really been too helpful for the Mexican-American. As you probably are aware, we do have several pockets of extreme poverty here in El Paso, one of them being South El Paso. Southeast El Paso has a lot of poverty too, and they are mostly Mexican-Americans. San Juan has a large concentration of poor Mexican-Americans. There are other Mexican-American communities in the outlying areas of El Paso which also experience a lot of difficulty financially.

L: We mentioned Representative Santiesteban. Is he representing the people of El Paso equally or is he concentrating on other groups?

C: State Senator Santiesteban, I believe, is doing an adequate job when you consider the fact that he is only one of 31 persons in the State Senate. As a State Senator, you have to be mostly at large. So he cannot really concentrate or work for the interest of one group. And he owes a lot to a lot of special interest groups, so that he cannot really speak, let's say, for the Mexican-American people. He does speak for, let's say, El Paso, but he cannot say, "I want this for the Mexican-American people." If he did, he'd probably be voted out of office in the next election.

L: I hear that La Raza Unida Party is also represented in the states of New Mexico, Arizona, California, and Colorado. Why do you choose to remain here in El Paso? You are known as a person that was defeated here in El Paso. Why don't you migrate to another state and start a new life?



C: Well, like I said, primarily because I was born and raised here in El Paso. I have a lot of roots here. To move to another state for political reasons would be very unwise.

I do not think that anybody from another state would be willing to welcome an outsider trying to intervene in their political affairs. I, myself, would look at somebody who would try that very suspiciously, to say the least--especially around this area where issues are very different, according to the communities. I have done some travel within this area, and I find that as you go from El Paso to Albuquerque, which also has a lot of Mexican-Americans, Spanish surnamed, the issues are not the same. They may have a lot of the same problems, but the factors involved are different. The philosophies of the people in the different towns are different; they are not exactly the same. I have been in Denver, Colorado, where there is also a lot of Mexican-Americans. And there is a lot of difference also in the way they look at problems and the way we look at problems. Maybe it's because we're closer to the border that we seem to be different from the other people. Let's say, for example, Denver and Los Angeles, which have a lot of Mexican-Americans also, seem to look at the Chicano in a more radical way, more militant. As for El Paso, you come to El Paso and you find that there is a lot of pride in being Mexican-American, there is a lot of orgullo, a lot of acceptance of the Mexican heritage, but you don't find as many militants or let's say the violence-prone militant in El Paso as you would find in the interior of the United States.

I neglected to mention San Antonio, which also has a lot of Mexican Americans, a lot of Chicano activism, and they are within the same state. If you look at both cities you will find that there are differences

between the two. It has been said that El Paso belongs in New Mexico. I don't know, maybe there should be another state, 'cause El Paso cannot be put in with Albuquerque or San Antonio. Like I said, they are basically the same problems but the factors involved /that/ influence the issues or problems are different.

In order to move to a different state, a different city, and try to establish oneself as a political figure, as a leader, as a person who would have solutions to their problems, one would have to study considerably before really entering into the politics of that city.

L: Apparently, the Chicano has faced discrimination from the Anglos. Would you believe that the Chicano would discriminate against the Blacks if the Raza Unida Party had people in office?

C: I do not believe that would be the case, primarily because Raza Unida is very wide-ranged in its issues; or if you want to call it, very liberal. We accept everybody. Anglos and Blacks have run under La Raza Unida. I would have to say categorically that definitely, in no way, would La Raza Unida consider as a policy, or in any other form, nor will it condone prejudice or discrimination against anybody, regardless of race, color, or creed.

L: I have talked to several other persons, and they do not agree with the word "Chicano" being imposed on them--politicians as well as social workers. Do you consider yourself a Chicano?

C: Yes, I find no problem in accepting the word "Chicano." I have come across a lot of people /who/ reject the word per se in identifying themselves socially or culturally.

I believe the word "Chicano" has come to be more accepted since the late 1960s. But I still do find a lot of people rejecting it. Maybe one

of the reasons is that originally the word, as I understand it, was the low or very low socio-economic level. And as you know, there are a lot of Mexican-Americans that have risen to a very high socio-economic level; and these are the people that I find that have a harder time accepting the word. Others probably have been educated in a way such that they find the word "Chicano" not relevant to their positions in society, regardless of their socio-economic status.

But, I still do believe that regardless of what you call yourself-- whether it be Mexican-American, Latino, Spanish surname, Chicano, Mestizo, whatever--the word Chicano still means one group of people who primarily have Spanish surnames or Mexican blood in them. And we should not be as bogged down with technicalities or words as with real issues, such as discrimination in schools, better education, better housing, and more employment, which Chicanos suffer from more than the average American person.

L: When you used, again, the word Chicano, you mentioned Spanish surname. Are you referring also to puertorriqueños, Cubans, people from South America, panameños, people as such?

C: Panameños, yes. As you probably know, Panama one time was part of México also. However, when we do mention Chicano, we say that it's more of an attitude, a feeling of being of Spanish descent, Mexican-American, and at the same time living in this nation, the United States, where you want to occupy México, Aztlán. As far as the Puerto Rican is concerned, I think that he will not fit the stereotype or the word Chicano, because he identifies himself as being Puerto Rican. Wherever he goes, he will say that he's a Puerto Rican, and I'm sure very proudly. The Cuban will probably say the same thing. Though we do have common bonds between Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Mexican-Americans, they still have a more

nationalistic view of themselves, or they identify more with the nation where they came from. The Chicano tends to identify less with México or any particular nation, as does the Puerto Rican or the Cuban.

L: I'd like to identify the case (I am talking about justice now) where Patty Hearst was recently released on bond. The El Paso Times quoted that "If you have the money, you can get out of jail," which is very true, like you said. But there is also the case of illegal aliens here in El Paso. If you were to be elected to a Justice of the Peace, would you give equal justice to the illegal alien, even though they are Mexicans?

C: Well, I think they're two separate things. When you are talking about Patty Hearst, you are talking about a double standard of justice, which certainly we do have here in the United States--a very distinct double standard of justice. I believe it was once said that "It is not how much justice you can get, but how much justice you can afford." I can also cite the retired President Richard M. Nixon, who had a lot of charges against him and still was able to get away.

As far as the illegal aliens, it is a very complex problem. As far as being in a position to issue justice equally between the rich and, let's say, the illegal alien, [it] would be very hard to say they are the same. But ideally speaking, both should have the same rights and be able to receive justice in a court of law regardless of their financial background, regardless of where they came from.

The Southwest faces the problem with the illegal alien, but I believe that this is mostly made up by the government officials who have to justify their problems, their inability to cope with unemployment, with a lot of programs and things they cannot provide. So they used the illegal alien as a scapegoat.