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ADDRESS BY REPRESENTATIVE MORENO ON A MATTER OF PERSONAL PRIVILEGE

Mr. Speaker, members, and it's more than members, my family. When I arrived in Austin today, I was a very, very, bitter individual. But a group of my friends went to my office and told me and gave me advice which I admire very much. When I came into this chamber and I received the applause I received, only those in my position can understand the pride that I have in belonging to this body, the Texas House of Representatives. Yes, I've been here a long time, and for the record, I've been here longer than our speaker. In fact, we're tied, but what I do, I throw in my military time, that makes it I will be here, I am here my twentieth term plus five years of military. Plus I am older—I don't know if I'm wiser, but I am older. This is why this is my home. I have spent over half of my life in here. So when some of you youngsters who have no idea how long you're going to be here, have spent some much time as I have in here, you're going to feel the way I do.

My friends, we are committing a very, very important mistake in this country, in this state. We are committing the fault, of really, really, in my belief, of hating Mexican people. I am 76 years old—I detest the word illegal aliens. I never did detest it so much as I detest it now, because it denotes the fact that we are the cause of the problems that are happening in this country. We do not get the credit of the tremendous economic success that this country is having right now. All you have to do is look here in Austin. Austin might call them the cranes, I call them the birds — the national bird of Austin, because there is so much construction going on. Who is performing a lot of that construction? Mexican people, a lot of them undocumented people. They are making and producing a robust economy, not only in Austin, but throughout the world, and we do not get credit for that. We do not get credit for the tremendous economical growth that is happening in this country.

We are blamed, we the Mexican people are blamed, for everything. My friends, look at me. I am a brown man. Where do you think this came from? This came from my Indian heritage. I didn't come here from Europe—my family has been all over North and South America for centuries and centuries. Yes, we have been here a long, long time, and we should not be called illegal aliens. You know, we are a people devoted to love, to love and respect to all others.

I heard that yesterday, my city, my beloved city of El Paso, was accused of having a bond issue of \$240 million, or something like that, and that we were doing nothing but educating illegal aliens. When I heard that, that really hurt me.

When you talk about the city of El Paso, educating illegal aliens, you're talking about my children. My family has been in El Paso for seven generations. Five of my brothers, and many of you have heard this, five of my brothers have served in the military. Five of my six brothers have served in the military. Two of my brothers-in-law, one of them was severely wounded in Europe. My other brother-in-law died as a result of agent orange, suffered in Vietnam. I have a cousin that was killed in Korea with me, died, from Denver. In El Paso, a very good friend of mine received the medal of honor. His name is Sandrocio Guillen, we call him El Mochó. And when they say that they're teaching illegal aliens, that hurts. That hurts very, very, very, very much. We should have the respect and the dignity that we as humans should give other people.

We had a good government here when Pete Laney was speaker. When he was elected the first election, I voted against him. I voted against Pete Laney because I thought he wasn't liberal enough, and I voted against him, and I think I'm the only one who's ever voted against Pete Laney. But most of you members that were here, during the Pete Laney era remember the appropriations bill that we had. Pete Laney placed me in the appropriations committee and we were able to bring an appropriations bill to this house. I opened up the debate in favor of the appropriations bill, thanks to my good friend Representative Pitts. He asked me to open the debate for the approval of the appropriations bill. We passed that appropriations bill without one dissent. At that time I said, "Paul, we're doing a good job." This is Texas, this is finally America, this is finally what you've been looking for—then something happened.

Leadership changed, and please, please, Mr. Speaker, don't take anything personal, but you have your deep political beliefs, and so does your group, and I noticed a lot of changes that happened. And when those changes happened, we started going down. Tonight I was determined to make a decision, and none of my friends changed my opinion. This country, this state, is in a worse position for Mexican Americans than it was when I first got elected. When I first got elected, there were eight of us, eight Mexican Americans. Yes, we knew—we knew our stand, we knew where we belonged. But there was respect. Now, the respect, in my opinion, has somewhat diminished. And in those days, the Mexican Americans were low in numbers, but we were still satisfied because we knew that there were very little of us and we were glad we were getting at least a little bit of it. Now things are changing.

Yes, some of you are going to issue statements denying what I'm saying. You're going to tell about how the numbers reflect more education, more money, etc., etc. But see, every time those numbers increase, we are diminishing, our people are suffering more. The undocumented worker is not at fault — he's not at fault for what is happening in this country. But this state especially is showing total disregard, and they're not showing that love that each of us as humans deserves. We have to show love. We have to show respect. Some of the younger members that came into this house are Mexican American members, came in very well dressed, very young group of members, very intelligent, very sharp. But

something happened. They changed their views. And they have forgotten—they have forgotten that we are still people that are suffering. And they have forgotten that we are people that believe in humanity.

I am the strongest believer in humanity there is. I believe strongly in humanity. The good Lord has been there with me because I've been here now for fifty-five years and I'm still here. Yes, I've had some bad times this last month or so, but I'm going to survive. Let me read a couple of notes that my good friend Jose Rocha has printed for me and did a great job. I'm going to read this, which I hardly ever do: "Members, I stand before you to this point of personal privilege because I feel that I must address many issues that are inherently hurting our great state of Texas. As thousands of visitors from all over the world walk the halls, awed at the rich cultural heritage and, unquestionably, a true melting pot, they listen carefully to the tour guides while they explain the road to independence of this state and the dynamics of the Mexican-American War. They do fail to hear that the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo transferred the Rio Grande region from a rich, cultural center, to a rigid border enforced by the United States government. At the end of the Mexican American War, 80,000 Spanish American Indian people were forced into sudden U.S. habitation. And unfortunately, while they sit in the gallery, they failed to hear the truth of our border cities, the fact that the ongoing bickering between our members and the office of our governor, stating that our border cities have been coming under attack by drug lords that are running our cities and that illegal aliens, a term that I genuinely, genuinely despise, are the roots of all the ill of this country.

Contrary to this belief, we all owe our country to Mexicans for the robust economy that we live in. And I repeat that—the robust economy that our company is having is based principally because of the undocumented worker in this country. Many people will disagree with what I'm saying and I will be accused of lies, because many people in this room do not in fact believe that they are being fair, that the state of Texas is being fair to all the people walking on the soil of this great state. The biggest and best friends of Texas are the undocumented and documented Mexican Americans that we've invited to this country. We, fortunately not my family, we came here way before then, but the Brazero Program, for the great need of this country during the Second World War, when America needed workers, they brought in the brazeros. The brazeros came into this country, and for the first time, they realized the riches of this country, and they started marrying into the culture and they started creating children. And those children remain now in this country, because they were invited to the Brazero Program, which was initially decided, initially designed, to bring a few hundred experienced, cultural workers to harvest sugar beets in Stockton, California, but soon spread to cover most of the United States to provide much needed farm workers to the agricultural workers needed during the Second World War.

They were invited years ago, when we allowed any Mexican that wanted to enlist into the United States Army by walking over the border. I know that for a fact, in El Paso, Mexicans were walking over that border to join the army, and at that time, nothing was asked about identification, nothing. They came over and

told them they wanted to come and join the army to protect America, to fight for this great country. And they came. Juarez now has a cemetery where Mexicans were killed during the Second World War, and we forget those things. The United States invited us. We are honest, working people, but now we are being blamed for contributing to terrorists.

Members, again, we should be blamed for the robust economy and the freedoms we enjoy everyday. Me and my family have proudly served, as I've told you, in this great Army and we already have provided many people, countless, many people for Iraq. And we go up there under the auspices of protecting this great country. How is it possible that we are being treated unfairly?

There is a great loss of respect for the Mexican American. We are being blamed for the social unrest plagued by the Republican's need to keep control. All of us Mexican Americans are proud Americans. Do not force us to not be proud Americans. Dignity and respect for all people, of all walks, ought to be our top priority as policy makers of this great state. Remember, those of us that were here, under Speaker Pete Laney—it was a pleasant, progressive, and fair state. Representative Pete Laney treated everyone with respect, humanity, and dignity, and as some of you remember that Pete Laney appointed my beloved friend Irma Rangel as chair of the Higher Education Committee. I used to kid a lot with Irma and I used to ask her everyday in my stupid way what orders did the speaker ask you. And she would tell me, "The speaker doesn't tell me anything. He lets me do what I think is right." And this is the way this state was. And I was so proud of it. Pete Laney was a fair person, and like I told you, I was a person that didn't vote for him. But then, things have changed.

Let me assure you that all the citizens of Texas, that those of us Latinos or Mexican Americans, Chicanos—whatever we call ourselves, that are here, that we are not going to be trampled on. Us Mexicans along with our black brothers have suffered a great deal of discrimination, and the ladies and gentlemen of today are seeing discrimination in this chamber.

Let me tell you some stories. The same discrimination that Jose Gutierrez, one of the many activists working to change public education on a local level in the 1960s and 1970s, while he was traveling to his home in the birthplace of La Rosa Nera. When he was walking, hitchhiking, coming in from Vietnam, he was refused a haircut because he was Mexican. The same discrimination that Mario Obledo, founding member and former national director of the Mexican American Legal Defense, an educational fund which is now known as MALDEF. He was very hurt when he was denied entrance to a public pool in San Antonio because he was Mexican. The same discrimination that Paul Moreno, the longest serving hispanic elected official in this country—yes, in this country. I am the longest elected official in this country—that includes Cubans, Puerto Ricans—I am the longest serving Latino, or whatever we call ourselves. We each suffered in this country, we each suffered in this state, in Austin. He was refused to rent a home in Austin because he was Mexican.

Mexican Americans have received some benefits in Texas, but we have lost more, and today here some people present us that we are losing more. We are being denied the benefits that make this country great—quality, voting, and

education. All of us colored brown are being looked down and spoken to as illegal aliens and I hate that much. Here my friends is a very great danger—that a war can develop, a war can develop against the races. Yes, I am very, very hurt at what's happening. And remember where we came from—we are basically Indians. Our Indians are strong people, and we can take it, but if we have to do something, we will do things. So I hope it doesn't happen. But we're at a point where unfortunately this may happen. I am not saying that I am provoking a war, but I have no alternative, because I am so hurt, so hurt, at what's happening to those of us that truly, truly believe in this country.

Like I told you when I came into this hall, and I received that applause, my heart was full of joy and happiness because you are my brothers, you are my sisters, and I know that deep in your heart you do not want to be mean to us. But you are being mean. You are being unfair. This bill that was passed that required all of this identification, that bill was strictly based against us. Please don't do those things. Let's love our country, love this state, and don't even think of us, don't even think of developing a race war, just because we are seeing things happening in Los Angeles, the way the police rushed into those poor innocent people and just beat them up. These issues are affecting the great state of Texas, and they affect my constituents in the great city of El Paso.

Let me assure you ladies and gentleman—I love this country, I love this state. And we can be—just show us fairness. Show us fairness—that's all we ask. That's all we ask—don't be so mean. And again I say that the majority of you people in here, the majority of my white friends in here, are basically good people. But you do not think you're hurting us. But just that term illegal aliens hurts us, hurts us very much. You're calling us un-American, you're telling us that we don't belong here. This is the term they use, illegal aliens. Please, have more respect. And I don't want to leave this house seeing it in worse shape than when I first got elected.

And I had to come tonight and give you this message, because I have to go back and take care of my Maria. She cannot be by herself. I love my Maria very much, I love my daughters very much, I love my children very much. And as a word of warning, our younger Mexican American kids cannot speak Spanish now. But I have noticed, in the last two or three years, that they are making an extra effort to learn Spanish when they grow up because they start understanding what is being done to us. My youngest granddaughter—she's in school, I go pick her up and what have you, and she had a teacher and I was curious as to what her nationality was. And I asked her, I said, "Mijita, your teacher, what is she?" "What do you mean, Papa?" "What is she?" "She's American." Right there I stopped, because I didn't want to go and ask her, is she black, is she Asian? I didn't want to ask her that. Because I knew if I asked that question that I would start thinking that there were differences in humanity, so I didn't.

My second grandchild, she was in school, and again she's bilingual now, and during the walkout we had some years ago, she wanted to get up and join the march. You know why? I asked her, I said, "why mija?" She said, "because my friend's father was being sent to Mexico and that's not right Papa."

So, what I'm telling you is we are denying them their rights, that you are making them more Mexican American, and more determined to know that there is nothing wrong with speaking Spanish, and English, and Chinese, and French, and Russian, and Greek, and Latin, and any other language, because the more we educate people, the better off we are.

So my friends, I want to thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to come down here and talk to you, because I was so bitter when I got here to Austin. But thank you my friends, thank you Trey, thank you, what's that guy's name from Del Rio? I forget his name all the time. They always come and torture me and tell me to keep my mouth shut. They did a good job. Juan — I look at him, I'm a little older, just a little older, but I still think he's my son because he actually believes what I tell him. The only thing he has learned from me is to drink some good Miller Lite. So thank you very much members. Please don't forget members, we are not your enemy. We are the owners of this state. We are the owners of this state — we're trying to help, we live here. We live here — we are brothers, we are sisters. Yes, dislike us for our conduct, where we smoke, or where we drink, or what we wear, but respect us.

So again, thank you very much, and I'm going back to El Paso because again, I got notice that my Maria was able to sit up in bed, and hopefully, she will be back up there, during the special sessions, because my friends, we are having special sessions. We cannot solve this terrible discrimination that is being perpetrated against us. So we're going to be in special sessions, and some of you people better forget about your visit to Boston, forget about your big business to the beach— we're going to be here and arguing, but when we argue, let's argue as intelligent people. Let's not argue as enemies. With that my friends, thank you—thank you, thank the Lord, and like George Bush says, "God Bless America." I don't say that, I don't. I've added something—I say God bless the world, because the world needs to be blessed. Not only El Paso, not only Texas, not only America. The whole world has to be blessed because we're killing each other. We're killing each other because we do not respect. Gracias.