

Each year the National Voting Rights Museum & Institute in conjunction with 21st Century Youth Leadership Movement, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference sponsor the Bridge Crossing Jubilee. The Annual Bridge Crossing Jubilee is held the first full weekend of March at the foot of the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Alabama commemorating “Bloody Sunday”, the Marches from Selma to Montgomery, and the passing of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. These events mark the political and emotional peak of the American’s Civil Rights Movement and hold a special place in American history.

Over 30,000 people gather every year to attend the Bridge Crossing Jubilee. The Bridge Crossing Jubilee is a festival of music, art, and history. Past notable guest speakers include President Bill Clinton, President Barak Obama, Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, Congressman John Lewis, Rev. Jesse Jackson, Rosa Parks, Coretta Scott King, among many others.

This year Chicago native Juan Salgado, President/CEO of Instituto del Progreso Latino was invited to speak on the Edmund Pettus Bridge regarding the immigrant struggle in the U.S. The following are the words Mr. Salgado shared at The Martin and Coretta King Beloved Community Unity Breakfast.

**The Martin and Coretta King Beloved Community Unity Breakfast Speech**  
**44<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Bloody Sunday**

by Juan Salgado, President,  
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

Thank you for the invitation to join you today. Born and raised on the south side of Chicago, this day, has for some time, meant a great deal to me.

I’m here representing the immigrant rights movement across this nation. We are honored to be included in this historic celebration.

44 years ago, this day fundamentally changed America. It reminded America that this is a nation of freedom, opportunity and respect for all human beings. It reminded America that we were failing to live up to our ideals. It caused us to act and make the right decisions and in so doing it strengthened our soul, our country and our position in the world.

I stand before you today because people of modest means across this country, working poor, unemployed, undocumented, white, black, brown and many shades in between have a choice to make.

We can listen to the perpetrators of hate and turn on each other. Today, known hate groups in America reach out to African-Americans and working class whites with a visceral message about illegal immigrants.

We can go the route of survival of the fittest engaging in ethnic and racial struggles for economic and political power only to realize this path is a long drawn out battle where all of us lose more than we gain.

We can choose the path of unity, the path with the greatest promise. The path our humanity calls us to. The path our faith insists we take.

This is the path that helped deliver the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, Barack Obama. On May 1, 2006, our then Senator Obama joined 500,000 marchers at Unity Park in Chicago to share his support for comprehensive immigration reform and keep rabid Republicans and their supporters, the kind of lost souls that stood at the foot of the Pettis bridge on Bloody Sunday, from criminalizing our entire community.

In 2008, we all marched together to the polls. 75% of foreign born Latinos across this nation voted for Barack Obama and 67% of all Latinos voted for Barack Obama helping win key battleground states.

We all know the closer you get to the Lord the more the devil tests you. So it is with the path of unity.

We are being tested when so many African-Americans have no work while immigrant labor is being exploited.

Fortunately, our nation has battle tested leaders that will not allow us to regress. People like Congressman John Lewis. Just a few weeks ago he stood with Congressman Luis Gutierrez and 3,000 immigrant families, listening to a child weep at the difficult decision to stay in the United States while her parents were deported. He knows rounding up families and separating a mother or father from a child will not make our communities or nation stronger.

Leaders like Congressman Benny Thomson who has identified the Sheriff of Maricopa County Arizona Joe Arpaio as a modern day Sheriff Jim Clark. Simply put Jim had to go and now Joe has to go. This is a new day.

We've got new leadership. Attorney General Eric Holder, an African-American son of Caribbean immigrants who is leading the effort to restore our basic values by executing the closing of Guantanamo Bay and knows well that current immigration enforcement of the style being flaunted by Sherriff Joe Arpiao has not place in a country as great as ours.

This is a new day. Together, we will help this country rise from our present day challenges and achieve reform for America, economic reform that lifts an entire nation up not just a few, health care reform that bring access to all, and yes, immigration reform that protects families and levels the playing field for all working people.