Hugo Morales against the gritty backdrop of Fresno, California

ALUMNI

Signals for Change

An alumnus dedicates his life to Latino radio.

With his flowing white hair and Mixtec Indian physique, Hugo Morales '72, J.D. '75, spoke recently to a crowd, mostly prominent Anglos, in San Francisco. "Some of the city halls around the state were shut down and more people were protesting. And issues of race, class, and native languages have surfaced," he said, referring to discrimination and political strife in his native state of Oaxaca, Mexico. Morales has lived in California since the age of nine, but he returns annually to Oaxaca and his tiny highlands village, Miltepec. He was last there, with his mother, in January. "Over 200 demonstrators are in jail," he continued, "and there have been allegations of torture. It's a very unstable situation that has not been widely reported."

Except on his radio station. Radio Bilingüe (RB), which he founded in Fresno in 1976, is the nation's only public Spanish-language radio network. The talk he gave, to supporters of California Tomorrow, which promotes social justice (he is board vice-chairman), reflects the salient issues aired on RB, especially during segments geared to the estimated 100,000 Mixtecs—and others of Mexico's native peoples—who work in fields, factories, and fast-food joints throughout California.

Indigenous languages such as Mixteco, Zapotecan, and Triqui are heard on RB, along with Brazilian Portuguese and Hmong—"other linguistically marginalized populations" that he says are well represented in Fresno. English is heard sometimes as well, particularly during the teenage program, *La Paz*. "RB creates most of its own content, so it speaks directly to the interests and needs of its audience," says RB board member Viola Canales '79, J.D. '89. "For example, RB was the only station that carried [last spring's pro-immigrant] marches live from start to finish."

For 31 years, Morales has shepherded RB—from an all-volunteer, mostly music venue funded by the Mexican equivalent of pancake breakfasts to a $3-million company with six stations in California and 90 satellite affiliates throughout the United States, Mexico, and Puerto Rico.

Photographs by Matt Black

Its programming is aimed at working "with listeners as agents of change and not merely as objects of change," according to its 2006 annual report. "RB is more than a radio station," says California assemblyman Juan Arambula '75, a friend since college. "It is the culmination of who Hugo is and his contribution to the betterment of society and to the people that he cares about. He is a public servant and I think he has made more of a difference in peoples' lives than he would have as an elected official."

To that end, *Noticiero Latino*—the news service—continues to report on the immigration debate. In February, reporters focused on the citrus freeze, interviewing some of the thousands of farmworker families affected and pointing to the slow arrival of federal aid. "Still, people are at the brink of losing their homes because they cannot pay mortgages," Morales says. "Federal funding does not allow for remuneration to the undocumented workers, and 70 percent of the farmworkers are undocumented." Other topics range from pollution control and AIDS among Latinos to the inflationary rise in tortilla prices.

Linea Abierta ("Open Line"), the nation's first and only Spanish-language live weekday talk show, offers roundtable discussions, interviews—with former president Bill Clinton and California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, among others—and live call-in dialogue between friends and family members in Mexico and the United States. Parents call in to *La Placita Bilingüe*, a virtual village plaza, to discuss teen obesity or gang violence, or to share family recipes and grapple with keeping up traditions, such as a daughter's debut at age 15—"A *Quinceañera*. Why do we bother doing this here in the States?" *La Paz* explores conflict resolution, academic achievement, drug abuse, and even teenage pregnancy. "Unfortunately, a disproportion of our youth are marginalized economically and are low performers in our public schools," Morales says. "From the beginning, we have dedicated programming and music to support them and recognize they're part of our family. Many people who tune in and write to us are behind bars."

His listeners are predominantly Latino immigrants, he says, many raising families on $30,000 a year or less. Contrast this to the National Public Radio audience, nearly half of whom earn upwards of $75,000 a year. "Most of my classmates probably listen to NPR as a way to connect," he explains. "And RB could be an NPR service, but we choose to serve the low-income population with intelligent, challenging programming in Spanish." Farmworkers represent a large chunk of RB's audience. "Some concrete gains have been made, but, relatively speaking, they continue to be among the most exploited class of workers in the United States," Morales asserts. "Who can say that a worker has a good quality of life if he or she is earning $7 per hour, has no health insurance, no unemployment insurance, no Social Security, and can't get a driver's license?"

Hugo Morales talks with some of the young participants in the *¡Viva el Mariachi!* workshop held during his radio station's annual mariachi festival.

It is a personal subject. Morales spent much of his own early life picking produce in northern California, alongside his parents and siblings. "My dad earned about $4,000 a year, which was typical, about $1 to $1.25 an hour," he says. "Once we came to the U.S., we all worked because that salary was not enough to feed us." When Morales was a year old, in 1950, his father, Rafael, crossed the border and became a farmworker in Healdsburg, about 80 miles north of San Francisco. That left his mother, Concepción, with three small children. "We were very, very poor," he says, remembering his mother weaving straw hats all day to buy the family a chicken. It was not until 1958 that they all boarded a Three Stars bus and, as resident aliens, reunited with Rafael, who had become a naturalized citizen.

Morales spoke no English, but was ahead in math (thanks to his Catholic schooling in Mexico). During recess, his third-grade teacher, who knew no Spanish, read him English-language picture books. "Toward the end of fifth grade, I began to get a clue about what was being talked about in the classroom," he says. "That's why I'm in favor of bilingual education."

Seventh grade was spent in a sanatorium, recovering from tuberculosis. There, he whipped through a year's worth of schoolwork in about six weeks, catching the eye of his teacher. At the same time, he was reading *Time* magazine and national newspapers, awakening a social consciousness that became the core of his adult identity. "I saw how the mainstream looked at Latinos, and I was shocked people would think we were dumb or lazy," he says. "I was living among very smart, talented people—musicians, poets, writers, carpenters—and I thought, 'These people have the wrong idea about us.'

What's Past Is Prologue by Sage Stossel

AS AT SO MANY COLLEGES, Harvard's graduation is attended by much pomp and circumstance ... and more than a little uncertainty.

"You are plunging into the great unknown," the graduation speakers intone.

But if the newly minted graduates would only take a considered look at the reunion classes descending on campus reunion week, they might observe their own futures passing before their eyes ...

From the glamorous optimism of the recent graduates ...

("I'll practice law for a while, but ultimately I plan to hold political office.")

To the humbling pragmatism of the middle years ...

("No, Becky! — Not on your sister's head!")

To the somewhat less glamorous optimism of the later years ...

("I think the kids can support us in assisted living.")

But whatever they do, and wherever their lives take them, it may be heartening for jittery new grads to know ...

... that there is at least one experience that they will all share...

That's when I really began to excel academically and to articulate to the outside what it was to be poor, and the merits of the people who were poor."

In high school, he joined the debate team and the school newspaper; he was elected student president and was the only person of color in the college-preparatory classes. Always close to his parents, especially his mother, whom he admires for raising him alone, he took to heart his dad's refrain: "It is our duty to help our community." He remembers boarding buses with his family to attend rallies organized by César Chávez. "I wore my UFW [United Farm Workers of America] Eagle pin every day in school; I was very blunt about my political views," he says, with a laugh. "Everybody knew who I was and what I stood for."

The potential power of radio as an instrument of social change first dawned on him when his brother, Candido, became the DJ of a Spanish-language music program in Sonoma County in 1964: "I saw every farmworker, of every age, listening to this program." (Candido is now president of the Institute for Mexicans Abroad, appointed by former Mexican president Vicente Fox; Morales's two sisters work as a teacher and as a speech therapist in California.)

At Harvard, Morales went to the larger demonstrations and advocated for increasing the number of Latinos on campus, but "was mostly studying." He did help develop the first Spanish-language programs on WHRB, playing Mexican folk music as well as Latino rock and jazz, and recruiting Puerto Ricans from outside the Harvard community to play salsa, recite poetry, and report on the independence movement. "He talked me into becoming a member of WHRB. I became a studio engineer for his program, in addition to having my own show," says Juan Arambula, who also grew up in a California farmworker family. "He's very good at that: he has the quality of making it difficult for people to say no to him."

By the time he got to law school, Morales had decided to become a public servant—maybe an elected official or a union organizer, and "I wanted to use radio to empower farm workers to help themselves," he says. During the summers he went home, worked in the fields, and lived in the farm labor camp with his parents. After graduation, he lectured for La Raza Studies at California State University in Fresno and posted flyers about starting a bilingual radio station.

"Everyone who called became a board member," he says, laughing. "There was no money; we began from scratch, organizing music concerts and holding *menudo*—tripe—breakfasts. The whole idea was to go back to our Chicano roots and build on that. We would net about $400, and a radio station cost about $200,000 to set up. We were quite romantic about the whole idea." It was Arambula who suggested appealing to foundations for grants: Morales convinced him to write the first proposal. In 1980—on the Fourth of July—RB went on the air, playing mostly folk music for listeners in the San Joaquin Valley.

Funding was a consistent problem until, in 1997, Morales installed 17 satellite downlinks, opening up major sources of revenue beyond the valley. These days Morales, who is known for his persuasive fundraising techniques (the station enjoys a 60 percent success rate on its grant proposals), still spends about half his time traveling to promote the station, often getting backaches driving the three hours between Fresno and San Francisco (he also has a house in Oakland) in his Prius. But the trips give him time to think. "I'm the ideas man," he says. "I come up with the big concepts." His cur-

Sage Stossel '93, executive editor of *The Atlantic Online*, regularly contributes editorial illustrations to the *Boston Globe*. She prepared this narrative of Harvard's June festivities after attending the muddy fifteenth reunion last year with her husband, Michael Callaghan, and her brother, Scott Stossel, both class of '91.

rent goals include decreasing reliance on public funding (the Corporation for Public Broadcasting provides 27 percent of the budget, much less than it used to); gaining a foothold in the Los Angeles media market; filing for spectrum space to become the only public-radio outlet for Latinos in Texas; and developing a national Spanish-language Latino news and information service for digital public-radio channels in the United States.

His honors include the 1999 Edward R. Murrow Award from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting for his "visionary" expansion of public radio and commitment to community service; he had already received a so-called "genius grant" from the MacArthur Foundation in 1994 for his creative and entrepreneurial approach to improving the lives of Latinos and other people of color. That mission remains his focus. Even his dog, a German Shepherd mix he rescued from the streets, is named Revolution. He also cares for 12 stray cats in his Fresno neighborhood, and has paid to have them fixed. ("When I see them surviving out on the street," he says, "it's an inspiration to me how affectionate they are toward humans despite the challenges they face.") He has no children, and recently moved in with his companion, Amy Kitchener, a folklorist for the State of California.

Spare time has often been spent visiting his parents. Although Rafael Morales, who died last December, had lived and worked in America for more than half his life, he wished to return to Mexico after death, so his wife and son made the trip to Oaxaca in January, burying Rafael's ashes in the Tequixtepec graveyard next to his parents. The elder Morales was also a musician: it was as secretary of the musicians' union that he crossed the border in 1950, ostensibly to retrieve some instruments. "Mariachi music was his bread and butter, and his passport to the U.S.," says Hugo Morales. "As Latinos," he adds, "we are a transnational population and mariachi is a national genre of music that brings all Mexicans and Mexican-Americans and U.S.-born Mexicans together."

RB has played its own role in fostering that link. Every March, Morales attends the station's annual mariachi festival, a fundraiser that draws thousands of people and is the longest-running event of its kind in the nation. "I think it is a good thing for immigrants, regardless of where they came from, to maintain their language and culture," he says. "And it is also important for all American immigrants to be a part of the mainstream, in order to function and be a part of this wonderful country, which is America." (He himself filed for citizenship the day he turned 18, because he wanted "a voice in my new adopted country.")

In practice, he acknowledges, it is a challenge to hold onto one's roots. "Even myself, at a certain point I was taken away—took myself away—from the community in order to help my community," he says. "So my retention of language and culture is very important. I could not maintain my sanity without my strong affirmation of who I am." ~ NELL PORTER BROWN

Comings and Goings

University faculty appear around the country to lecture on their specialties and meet with alumni. Here is a list of some of the speakers traveling to local clubs this spring. For details, contact the club in question, call the Harvard Alumni Association (617-495-3070), or go to www.haa.harvard.edu.

On May 2, former University Marshal Richard Hunt talks about "Harvard on the World Stage" for the Harvard-Radcliffe Club of Philadelphia. The Harvard Club of Santa Barbara hosts psychology professor Marc Hauser on May 4. On May 6, members of the Harvard Club of Central Florida can hear about "Why Americans Love God and Europeans Don't" from associate professor of government and social studies Glyn Morgan. Appearing at the Old Colony Harvard Club on May 8 to discuss "Life at Harvard College Today" is the College's dean, Benedict Gross. Christopher Queen, of the Division of Continuing Education, is at the Harvard-Radcliffe Club of Western New York on May 9. The next day, McArthur University Professor and Nobel laureate in economics Robert Merton talks with members of the Harvard Club of Quebec. The Reverend Peter J. Gomes, Plummer professor of Christian morals, is at the Harvard Club of New Jersey on May 16, and at the Harvard Club of Birmingham the following evening. On May 17, Chua Tiampo professor of business administration emeritus George Cabot Lodge explains "Economic Development and Poverty Reduction" to the Harvard-Radcliffe Club of Rochester. The Harvard Club of Northeast Ohio hosts Ali Asani, professor of the practice of Indo-Muslim languages and cultures, for a lecture on "Understanding Islam and the Role of Religion in Muslim Societies: Going Beyond the Headlines" on May 23.

On June 5, Loeb professor of classical art and archaeology David Mitten reveals "Macedonian Royal Tombs at Vergina and Their Contents" for the Harvard Club of Southern Connecticut.

Candidates for Election

This spring, five new Harvard Overseers and six new elected directors for the Harvard Alumni Association (HAA) board will be chosen by alumni. Election results will be announced at the HAA's annual meeting on June 7, Commencement day. All Harvard degree holders, except Corporation members and officers of instruction and governance, are entitled to vote for Overseer candidates; all degree holders may vote for director candidates.

The candidates, listed below in their order on the ballot, are:

For Overseer (six-year term, five to be elected):

Richard A. Meserve, J.D. '75. Washington, D.C. President, Carnegie Institution of Washington.

Lucy Fisher '71. Los Angeles. Film producer and co-head of Red Wagon Entertainment.

Lisa M. Quiroz '83, M.B.A. '90. New York City. Senior vice president, corporate responsibility and inclusion, Time Warner Inc.

Ronald Cohen, M.B.A. '69. London. Chairman, Portland Capital and The Portland Trust.