

# “CINCO DE MAYO CON ORGULLO”

## Our Culture is Not for Sale

### INTRODUCTION

**O**N **SUNNY DAYS** in early May, neighborhoods across the state of California and the Southwest will hear the music of mariachis and bask in the joyous color of Mexican folkloric dance. Families of all backgrounds will look forward to enjoying a day outdoors with their children and their friends. Non-profit organizations, merchant associations, and local governments will have planned the festivities months in advance. But alcohol companies are ahead of the game – they are already well prepared to make this year's celebrations as profitable for them as they have been in the past, regardless of the consequences that drowning Cinco de Mayo in alcohol may have for all of us.

Community celebrations flooded with large quantities of alcohol and its advertisements create environments that promote high consumption of alcohol. Cinco de Mayo celebrations have been increasingly infested with violence, crime, underage drinking, increased DUI citations and other problems caused, in part, by heavy alcohol consumption and inappropriate advertising targeted toward Latinos.

The good news is that there is a lot we can do to affect the environment created by alcohol-sponsored

“Cinco de Mayo con Orgullo”  
is not just about one day  
in May, it is about freedom  
from years of exploitation  
of Latino communities by  
the alcohol industry.

events. Communities statewide and in other parts of the country are reclaiming Cinco de Mayo from the alcohol industry through the “Cinco de Mayo con Orgullo” (with Pride) Campaign. Organized by Latinos and Latinas for Health Justice (LLHJ), this Campaign has taken the lead in telling the alcohol industry that Our Culture is Not for Sale!

*¡Nuestra Cultura No Se Vende!*

by **Anita De Lucio-Brock, MPH**

*Anita De Lucio-Brock, MPH, has worked against the appropriation of Cinco de Mayo by the alcohol industry for over a decade. She is now pursuing a career as a visual artist.*



# CINCO DE MAYO

## WHAT IS CINCO DE MAYO?

First things first, Cinco de Mayo is NOT Mexican Independence Day! In the early 1860s, the French, led by Napoleon III, invaded Mexico. The country's first indigenous President, Benito Juárez, rallied his countrymen and declared that Mexico would resist until death. In 1862 the Mexican forces surprised the invading French forces in the city of Puebla with a resounding victory, which occurred on May 5th, Cinco de Mayo. This battle symbolized the Mexican resistance and their determination to retain their hard-fought independence. Eventually, the French wearied of this costly struggle and withdrew from Mexico (Hernandez-Alarcón, 1999).

This holiday is not as widely celebrated in Mexico as in the U.S.

However, for people

of Mexican ancestry in this country, Cinco de Mayo has come to symbolize the struggle for sovereignty, self-determination, and the commitment to fight even when the odds seem insurmountable.

History, Family, Culture, Music, and Community are all essential to the heart of Cinco de Mayo. These are also the very things that keep us healthy, as individuals, as families and as a community.



## WHY IS CINCO DE MAYO SO IMPORTANT TO LATINOS?

Inspired by the Civil Rights movement, Chicanos and Latinos in the 60's and early 70's organized Cinco de Mayo celebrations on college campuses and in cities. These events celebrated history, música and cultura. As Latino populations grew in urban and rural areas of the Southwest, Cinco de Mayo celebrations became more prominent and diverse. Cinco de Mayo has become a holiday recognized and celebrated by people of all backgrounds.

# HOW DID CINCO DE MAYO TURN INTO A DRINKING HOLIDAY?

## THE ALCOHOL INDUSTRY TAKES NOTICE

As Latinos grew in numbers, so did our buying power. The alcohol industry was among the first to sit up and take notice by creating culturally specific advertising. These ads often portray sensual Latinas, establishing a dangerous link between alcohol and sex.

In the '80s, the alcohol industry initiated Cinco de Mayo promotions, thus turning this historic event

into one of the most lucrative holidays for beer companies. While under the influence of alcohol money, Cinco de Mayo became widely promoted not only among Latinos but also among the main stream population as an opportunity to "be Mexican" by drinking.

Linking Cinco de Mayo with alcohol sends a dangerous message to children and youth who learn little about Mexican and

Latino heritage in schools. Instead, advertisements teach youth that an essential part of Latino culture and identity is to consume and abuse alcohol.



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO ACCEPT ALCOHOL INDUSTRY SPONSORSHIP OF CINCO DE MAYO CELEBRATIONS?

### *About sponsorship*

Philanthropy is an important component of marketing and promotion because it allows industries to establish relationships within communities and gain allies.

When a beer company sponsors a Cinco de Mayo celebration, the company usually demands exclusive rights to sell their product at the event. Groups are encouraged to use the sale of alcohol as a fund-raising opportunity. Consequently, groups that are strapped for cash have a powerful incentive to sell as much alcohol as possible. The local beer distributor also provides prominent booths, a multitude of promotional products, giant inflatable beer cans and enticing ads as "decorations".

When the alcohol industry succeeds in sponsoring a local community Cinco de Mayo celebration, the industry essentially brands and claims the event.

*Why do community groups take money from the alcohol industry for their Cinco de Mayo celebrations?*

The "Cinco de Mayo con Orgullo" Campaign does not seek to vilify groups that accept alcohol funds but to point to the alcohol industries efforts to make allies among communities by giving money to organizations faced with limited funding. Rejecting alcohol funding is no easy task. Many things can stand in the way:

- Funding is limited for nonprofit organizations and cultural events;
- Opponents fear being the lone voice of dissent;
- Communities worry the debate will result in division and raise broader questions about funding, alcohol sales and its promotions;
- Community groups or event organizers may not see a relationship between alcohol sales and problems at celebrations; and
- Local leaders and organizations may be reluctant to face the impact of alcohol on Latinos .

# WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF ALCOHOL-SPONSORED EVENTS?

*Our Communities Suffer:* Although accepting alcohol money can seem like a quick and easy funding source, communities have witnessed many negative consequences. For more than ten years, alcohol-funded Cinco de Mayo events have been plagued by many alcohol-related problems including:

- Littering
- Public Intoxication
- Violence
- Sexual Assault
- Arrest
- Under-Age Drinking
- DUI

*Our Neighborhoods Suffer:* When these events are held near residential areas, the neighborhood absorbs the brunt of alcohol consequences.

*Our "Cultura" Suffers:* In a country where Latinos are still routinely stereotyped, the alcohol-related problems listed above can often be considered the natural consequence of a gathering of people of color.

Yet, it is no accident that these behaviors all take place under the waving banners of some of the largest-grossing beer companies in the country.

*Our Celebrations Suffer:* Families often choose not to attend alcohol-sponsored Cinco de Mayo events out of concern for their childrens safety.

*Our Organizations Suffer:* Organizations can develop a dependence on alcohol funds, which can limit creative fundraising. Diversified funding can result in a more inclusive event that engages more local merchants and community groups.

*The Alcohol Industry Wins:* A study conducted by the Center for Science in the Public Interest found that a significant number of the groups who accept alcohol funds hesitate to take a stand on alcohol-related policy issues (CSPI, 1996). In giving our community money, the alcohol industry not only gains a new market for their product, but potentially a new ally for their interests.



# THE CAMPAIGN

The “Cinco de Mayo con Orgullo” Campaign was born...when communities like yours declared, “¡Ya Basta! Enough is Enough!”

## About the “Cinco de Mayo con Orgullo” Campaign

In the early 1990’s, Latino neighborhood leaders began to question the role of alcohol industry sponsorship in their Cinco de Mayo events. Concerned individuals observed a dangerous relationship between sponsorship, excessive drinking and violence. They sought out like-minded allies and organized to reclaim the holiday.

The campaign’s goal is to promote the true meaning of the holiday and to support safe, alcohol-free, family-oriented, and culturally appropriate celebrations.

Since 1997, Latinos and Latinas for Health Justice (formerly California Latino Leadership United for Healthy Communities) has been involved in the “Cinco de Mayo Con Orgullo” (With Pride) Campaign to combat the abuses of the alcohol industry.

Supporters of the campaign also work in their local communities to:

- Promote a greater awareness of the negative impacts of alcohol upon the Latino population;
- Reduce the instances of DUIs resulting from alcohol abuse at Cinco de Mayo events;
- Stop promotions that encourage heavy consumption and underage drinking;
- Prevent advertisements designed by alcohol manufacturers, retailers or restaurants that demean Latino culture and use Latinas as sex objects; and
- Urge policy changes to reduce the availability of alcohol, especially to underage youth.



## Successful Campaign Sites

### What has been the impact of the “Cinco de Mayo con Orgullo” Campaign?

#### Safe and Successful Alcohol and Tobacco-Free Events

In 2002, the “Cinco de Mayo con Orgullo” Campaign successfully hosted more than 15 alcohol-free celebrations in the state [see map]. The Campaign has been successful because it developed from the momentum of years of local grassroots efforts. Families now have an alternative to Cinco de Mayo events that are saturated with alcohol and alcohol-related problems. In addition, communities have reported a decrease in violence and arrests when events are not alcohol-sponsored.

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### Freedom from Alcohol Industry Funds

Although it takes more work to gather the funds to replace a single alcohol industry gift, an event can be successful and its support more widespread when we are not dependent on industry money.

### Strong Coalitions & Collaborations

Campaign organizers are partnering with local businesses, churches, tobacco prevention activists, the recovery community and diverse groups to create events that better celebrate their communities strengths.

### Youth Involvement

Since the early 90's, young people have emerged as leaders, trainers, speakers, and organizers in the Campaign. Youth have also outreached to peers from various ethnicities that see the impact of alcohol-industry targeting in their own communities.

### Increased Community Prevention Skills

The Campaign is strengthening communities abilities to enact environmental prevention in their neighborhoods. Community groups are gaining a working knowledge of the alcohol industry's targeting strategies. Although the campaign focuses on a single holiday, it allows communities to put into action the principles of environmental prevention year-round.

The "Cinco de Mayo con Orgullo" Campaign has become a catalyst for many communities to take action against the influence of the alcohol industry in their neighborhoods and cities.

Of all the prevention policies available, the "Cinco de Mayo con Orgullo" Campaign has found greatest success in hosting alcohol-free events and suggests the following pointers for hosting your own celebration:

- Build a coalition of like-minded community groups.
- Don't be afraid to start small: It's OK to begin with a small event and build momentum over the years!
- Likewise, don't be afraid to think big! In 2002, San Diego hosted the largest alcohol-free Cinco de Mayo celebration in the state, attended by more than 10,000 people.
- Use educational materials to promote your event and the true meaning of Cinco de Mayo.
- Encourage local merchants to reject Cinco de Mayo alcohol ads.
- Create flyers that reflect your area's diversity. The City of Hayward creates Cinco de Mayo flyers in the Farsi language!
- The media is your greatest asset to promote your coalition, to report on the success of your alcohol-free celebration, and to bring the issue to the forefront.
- Hold a press conference to launch your campaign. Use visuals like a "Wall of Shame" depicting offensive advertisements.
- Prior to your event, host an acknowledgement ceremony to recognize your volunteers and financial supporters. Be sure to invite the media!
- Ask your elected officials and local celebrities to support the "Cinco de Mayo con Orgullo" Campaign.
- When you're done, don't forget to collect all press coverage of your event!

# BEYOND CINCO DE MAYO

Sadly, Cinco de Mayo is just one of many cultural celebrations that have been branded by the alcohol industry. Through sponsorship and targeted advertising, beer and liquor companies have put themselves on our calendars year-round. Halloween, Saint Patrick's Day, Juneteenth, Lunar

New Year celebrations, Powwows and GLBT Pride events have all become fair game to an industry that disregards the well being of our communities when profits are at stake. These practices will continue unless we find the strength to declare, "Our Culture is Not for Sale!"

## SELF ASSESSMENT

### Discussing Alcohol Industry Sponsorship in Your Community

Simply discussing sponsorship can be daunting. Remember that if you are concerned about alcohol sponsorship, you are most likely not the only one. Has your organization or community considered:

- ✓ What kind of events are sponsored by the alcohol industry in your community?
- ✓ What problems result from alcohol sponsorship of community events?
- ✓ Which groups take the alcohol money in your community and how are they regarded?
- ✓ Can you "wean" an event off alcohol sponsorship by gradually reducing alcohol funding, alcohol sales, and display of ads?
- ✓ How does the industry approach groups/communities?
- ✓ How does the industry promote its products at alcohol-sponsored events in your community?
- ✓ Which aspects/components/lessons learned from the "Cinco de Mayo con Orgullo" Campaign would be useful if you were to launch a similar campaign in your community?
- ✓ Who may be some of your allies in building a campaign on the issue of sponsorship?
- ✓ What support/resources would you need to build such a campaign?
- ✓ What small step can you take to plant the seeds of cultural preservation in your community?

# EMT

Evaluation, Management and Training  
391 S. Lexington Drive, Suite 110  
Folsom, CA 95630-6802

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

## prevention **Tactics**

### CONTACTS:

#### Latinos and Latinas for Health Justice "Cinco de Mayo con Orgullo" Campaign

27287 Patrick Ave.  
Hayward, CA 94544

Northern California: Daniel Torres 209-468-2575

Southern California: Jovita Hurtado 619-890-6942 [www.llhj.org](http://www.llhj.org)

"Cinco de Mayo con Orgullo" Trainings & Presentations, Tool Kit, Videos, Campaign Materials & Posters.

#### California Alcohol Policy Reform Initiative (CAPRI)

Contact: Bill Gallegos  
2104 Cove Ave.

Los Angeles, CA 90039

323-660-5119 (ph/fax) [billg4@earthlink.net](mailto:billg4@earthlink.net) [www.tf.org](http://www.tf.org)

#### EMT Prevention Extension Community-Organization Workshop

This workshop introduces the participants to different organizational models at the same time it uses their individual experiences as a vehicle for group reflection. The workshop will present basic tools for community organization and social change, such as recruiting ideas, access to public institutions and handling of basic concepts for environmental prevention and establishment of policies to follow. **Available in both Spanish and English!** Developed by The Marin Institute. Delivered by George Vásquez.

### RESOURCES:

*Paying the Piper: The Effect of Industry Funding on Alcohol Prevention Priorities*  
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*Hands Off Halloween: Responsible Merchants Campaign Manual.*  
Center on Alcohol Advertising. 1997.

*Case Histories in Alcohol Policy.* Joel Streicker, Ed. Trauma Foundation. 2001.

*Cinco de Mayo con Orgullo Coalition Video.* Sevilla Productions. San Diego, CA. 2002.

"The True Meaning of Cinco de Mayo". By Eduardo Hernández-Alarcón, Ph.D., March 1999.

Many of the statements, insights, guidelines and tools have emerged from the statewide collaboration of community members involved in the "Cinco de Mayo con Orgullo" Campaign.

Prevention Tactics are now available in Spanish!

¡Las Tácticas de la prevención están ahora disponibles en el español!

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**916.983.9506**



fax us at  
**916.983.5738**



or send an email to  
**[cmkord@emt.org](mailto:cmkord@emt.org)**

## prevention **Tactics**

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**Author:** Anita De Lucio-Brock, MPH

**Graphic Design:** Art Farmer Design

**Editor:** Chrissy Kord

**Tactics** (tak'tiks) n. **1.** a plan for promoting a desired end.  
**2.** the art of the possible.