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Former Governor Raúl H. Castro

is a frequent speaker these days in school classrooms. It's an activity he does for free, of course, but one he was denied as a young man when too many Arizona school districts refused to hire non-white teachers.

The story of his early life is at once historic and inspirational: He uses it to tell young people that success is possible no matter the obstacle.

Like other Arizonans of Mexican ancestry, Castro faced heavy ethnic discrimination as a schoolboy. He attended a segregated elementary school, took part in Anglo–Mexican playground fights in middle school and was banned from the YMCA swimming pool except during the Saturday afternoon hours just before the weekly cleaning.

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Left: July 11, 1975
Above: Jan. 6, 1975, Castro and his wife, Patricia, on the day of his inauguration.
Right: Jan. 6, 1975, Arizona Gov. Raúl Castro delivers his inauguration speech. Castro served as the state's first—and so far only—Latino governor.

Raúl H. Castro—

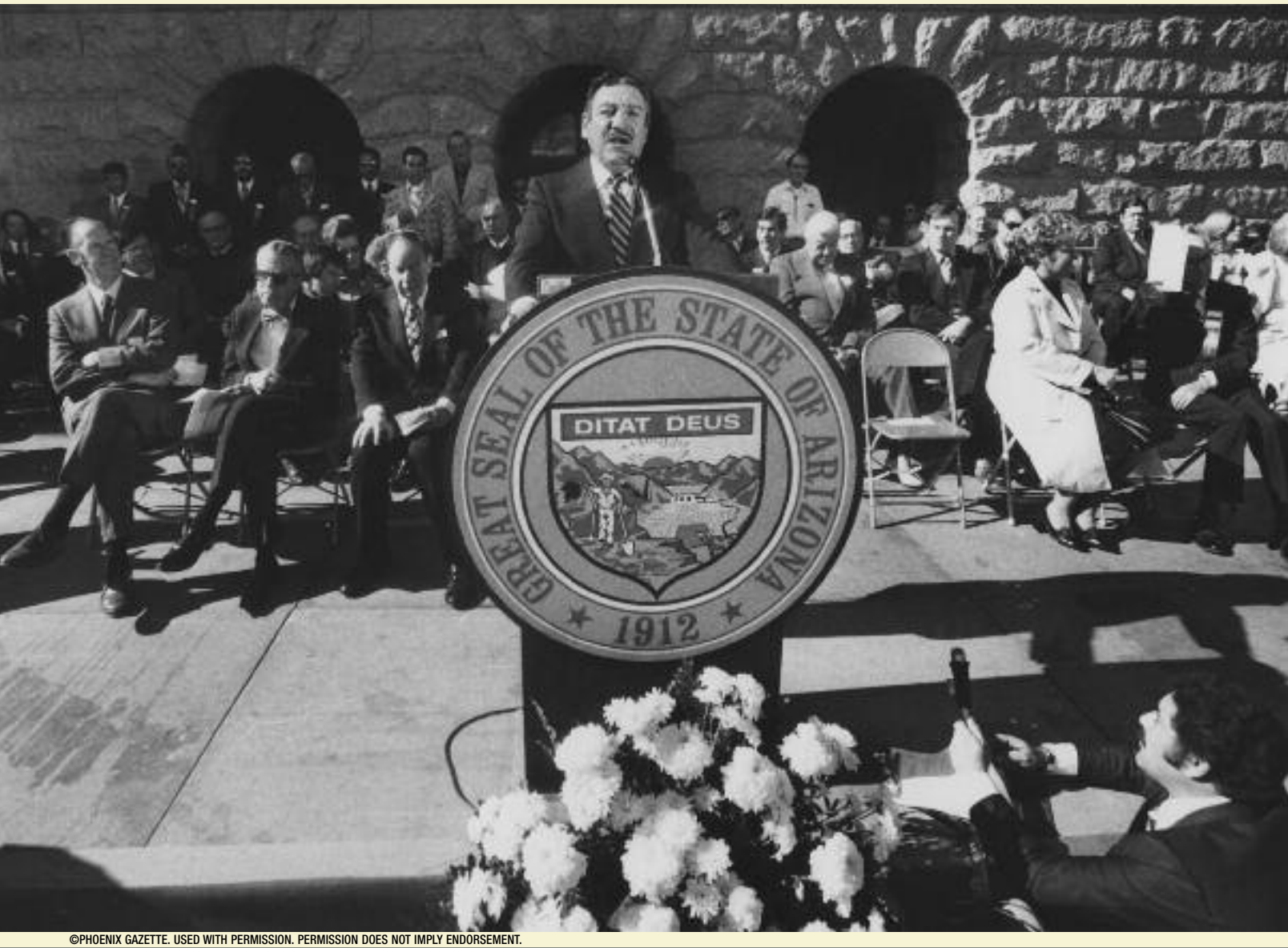
His early adult experience is perhaps best summed up by the failure of a post-college job hunt in which he was turned down for teaching positions across southern Arizona, from his adopted hometown of Douglas on the east to Ajo on the west.

"I couldn't even be a mail carrier in my day," he recalls. "I took every exam in the post office and everywhere else, even an FBI exam, but come to the oral interviews? Because my eyes weren't blue, that was the end of the story."

Castro, now 93 and living with wife Pat in Nogales, overcame a string of ethnicity-based rejections to become Arizona's only Hispanic governor, after making similar state history when Pima County voters elected him first as their county attorney and then as a Superior Court judge. He ended his career as a public servant in 1980 after serving as U.S. ambassador to Argentina, Bolivia and El Salvador.

It has been more than a quarter of a century since the Castro name appeared regularly in news reports, but the record remains well known, partly because of the myriad honors that have come his way, among them the naming of a building at Northern Arizona University (his alma mater when it was known as Arizona State Teachers College), an institute at Phoenix College and a classroom at the University of Arizona, where most of his papers are housed in the library's special collections section.

The Tenth Street Park in Douglas, the town where he grew up, even has been renamed in his honor. It was during one of his boyhood visits to the park that George W. P. Hunt, a seven-time gov-



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The Early Years

BY DONALD W. CARSON

ernor of Arizona, addressed a political gathering, and said, "Who knows? One of these days, one of these barefooted kids here may be your next governor." Castro says that the governor's finger pointed straight at him.

The imprint of the past remains a part of the Castro present.

He was born in Cananea, Sonora, Mexico, on June 12, 1916. The family—Castro was the 12th of 14 children—came to the United States in 1918, when his father was granted political refugee status after serving six months in a Hermosillo prison for his activities as a mine union leader.

The Castros settled in Pirtleville, an overwhelmingly Latino community about four miles from Douglas. His father immediately found work at the nearby smelter, and nine of the Castro brothers at one time or another worked at either the mine or the smelter.

For young Raúl, the ethnic roadblocks began when he entered the Douglas elementary school: It was about four miles from their home, and the school district provided bus service only for Anglo students. "Why do they ride and we have to walk?" he remembers asking his mother.

The Castro family spoke Spanish at home, but at school even a single word of Spanish was punished with a ruler swat on the hand. "By the end of a day," he says, "my hand looked like a baseball mitt."

Even a single word of Spanish was punished with a ruler swat on the hand. "By the end of a day," he says, "my hand looked like a baseball mitt."

Castro and his Pirtleville friends often were teased about their Spanish accents.

"Church was schurch and chips was ships," he recounts. "You don't say *miss*, you say *meese*." To correct that problem, he regularly stood in front of a mirror to develop an Anglo pronunciation. "I was embarrassed," he says. "I didn't want to be the class clown of the century. It was devastating."

In the fifth grade one day, Castro felt the gentle hand of teacher Eileen Wright on his shoulder. She told him he was not working hard enough and that he was capable of doing better. "I thought

Oct. 31, 1970: In 1970, Raúl Castro, shown here with supporters, was a candidate for Arizona governor.

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that teacher must care for me; I don't want to disappoint her. It was inspirational. It changed my attitude," he says.

At middle school, the students were artificially segregated by perceived intelligence, and the Anglo administrators tended to keep the ethnicities apart. Before school, Castro recounts, the boys lined up in battles called "race against race." They fought with fists, rocks and sand, and arrived in the classroom "bloody and smelly," he says. "Nothing was ever done about it."

By the time he entered high school, Castro was determined to succeed. His grades were good, and he excelled as an athlete, earning plaudits as an underweight, 140-pound quarterback for the Douglas Bulldogs.

Another teacher entered his life. C. W. "Pop" Wilson taught English and journalism and pushed him to undertake activities that Castro, a self-described *macho* athlete, thought were for "sissies." Castro ultimately became editor of the school's *Border Bulldog* newspaper. Wilson also talked him into a class in drama, and he learned what it was like to face a crowd. "He pursued me; he thought I could do something," Castro says.

Castro's quarterbacking skills won him a football scholarship to Arizona State Teachers College in Flagstaff, but after his sophomore year, he switched his athletic interests to boxing and track. At 5-feet-9 and 148 pounds, he was undefeated and won the welterweight championship of the Border Conference, which included Arizona and Arizona State plus a group of Texas schools. He also captured the conference championship in the half-mile.

The college years had been good ones.

After receiving his teaching degree, he returned to the family

Jan. 7, 1975: Castro sits in his new office on his first day as governor of Arizona.

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A Life and Career of Note

1916	Born June 12, Cananea, Sonora, Mexico
1918	Family moved to Pirtleville, Ariz., when labor leader father received amnesty and political asylum after serving six months in prison for his activities as a mine union leader
1931	Enrolled at Douglas High
1935	Entered Arizona State Teachers College (Flagstaff)
1939	Graduated from ASTC and became a U.S. citizen (November 21)
1939-41	Professional boxer, hobo, migrant worker
1941-46	U.S. State Department: consul's office, Agua Prieta, Sonora
1946-49	University of Arizona Law College and UA Spanish teacher
1949-54	Private practice and Deputy Pima County Attorney
1955-59	Pima County Attorney (elected to two two-year terms)
1959-64	Judge of the Superior Court in Pima County (elected to three two-year terms)
1964-68	U.S. ambassador to El Salvador (appointed by President Lyndon B. Johnson)
1968-69	U.S. ambassador to Bolivia (appointed by Johnson)
1970	Democratic nominee for governor, defeated by incumbent Republican Jack Williams, 50.9 percent to 49.1 percent
1974	Defeated Republican Russ Williams, a former Arizona Corporation Commission member, 50.37 percent to 49.62 percent
1975-77	Arizona governor. Resigned Nov. 16, 1977
1977-80	U.S. ambassador to Argentina (appointed by President Jimmy Carter)
1980-2000	Private practice of law in Phoenix
2000-06	Private practice in Nogales
2006	Retired from practice

home in mid-1939, and he and his siblings became U.S. citizens a few months later.

Castro expected to find high school work as a teacher or coach, but that was not to be. The Douglas School Board officially prohibited the hiring of Mexican–American teachers. Other school applications met the same fate. When efforts to obtain federal employment fizzled, he left Arizona.

For nearly two years, Castro worked as a field hand in Montana, Oregon, Idaho and California. He also toured the nation courtesy of the railroads and the thumb of a hitchhiker. Whenever he spied a carnival or similar opportunity, he earned $50 or $100 as a professional boxer. He figures he had about 10 fights during that time, and won them all.

As a hobo and migrant worker, Castro traveled light, but he did it with a flair. He wore farmer's coveralls (the ones with straps) when he rode the boxcars, but he donned his college letter sweater when he hitchhiked. He recalls no difficulty getting rides.

Riding the trains was tricky only in that law-enforcement officers often waited at rail yards, and a 15-day jail sentence for vagrancy awaited those they detained. Castro recalls spotting police one time when his freight train rolled into Los Angeles. To avoid arrest, he jumped out to hide, but inadvertently tumbled into "some sort of a garbage dump," where he remained undetected. Afterwards, he headed toward a brother's house for a shower. On the road, Castro says, quality personal hygiene was a now-and-then luxury.

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July 6, 1978: Castro with his grandchildren, Mimi, left, and Donald.

Castro regularly sent money home to his mother, but he ended his hobo days when brother Ernesto questioned the value of college if the only guarantee was the life of a hobo.

Raúl Castro talked his brother into staying in Flagstaff, then set an example by returning to Douglas, where he, in turn, acquired a State Department job in the Agua Prieta consulate across the border. Ernesto received his teaching degree and embarked on a lifetime teaching career.

Castro might have remained in the Foreign Service had it not been for the advice of William Blocker, the consul general in Juarez. He praised Castro's work highly, but then cautioned that promotions would be rare. He explained that the State Department system would work against him because he was born in Mexico and hadn't attended Princeton, Harvard or Yale.

After five years, Castro pondered a different future. Still in love with the classroom, he had been volunteering as a Spanish teacher at the Douglas YWCA, and had become friendly with one of the students, David K. Wolfe, a military captain stationed in Douglas. Wolfe was planning on law school, and suggested they

The Law Class of 1949

Raúl H. Castro graduated from the University of Arizona Law College six decades ago in what can easily be described as an all-star class.

In addition to Castro, the only Hispanic ever elected governor of the state, the class of 1949 included **Hayzel B. Daniels**, a pace-setting African American. Daniels was the state's first black attorney, first black judge (1965, Phoenix City Court) and one of the first two blacks elected to the State Legislature (1950, along with Carl Sims).

No. 1 in the class was **Robert O. Lesher**, who achieved his degree with high distinction and later served briefly by appointment on the Arizona Supreme Court (1960). **Morris K. Udall, John M. Favour** and **J. LaMar Shelley** graduated with distinction.

Udall, of course, was best known as one of the leading environmentalists of the late 20th century. He served 30 years in the U.S. House of Representatives, and he was runner-up to Jimmy Carter for the 1976 Democratic presidential nomination.

The class also included **Samuel P. Goddard Jr.,** a Democrat who spent one term as governor (1965-67), **Robert W. Pickrell,** a Republican who served as attorney general (1961-64) and Superior Court judge in Maricopa County (1974-91), and two longtime Pinal County Superior Court judges, **Timothy J. Mahoney** (1960-78) and **E.D. "Bud" McBryde** (1966-90).

Others on the Law College's list of 45 graduates: **Thomas E. Allin Jr., William G. Bergman Jr., Andrew L. Bettwy, Normand F. Birtcher, Ellis B. Brannon, J. Luther Davis, John McKey Dickerson, John L. Donahue Jr., Reid Flamm Ellsworth, Leonard Everett, Lurline Gray, James H. Green Jr., Oliver T. Hamilton, Beverly Harris, Virginia Hash, Ruth D. Kautz, C. Max Killian, Burton R. Lewkowitz, David G. Licht, William S. Lindamood, Eugene B. McKay, Joseph A. McKinley Jr., Elizabeth L. Moran, Boyd McDavid Morse, Aaron Garth Nelson, Patrick W. O'Reilly, Raymond E. Peterson, William Walter Peterson, Denzil G. Tyler, Arthur Van Haren Jr., Carl Waag, Richard D. Walker, Edward E. Williams, James M. Wilson** and **James O. Wood.**

do it together. Castro liked the idea and headed for Tucson, where he would discover unexpected discriminatory attitudes on the University of Arizona campus.

Castro needed a job before enrolling, so his first visit was to the university's student placement office, where a professor he had known at Arizona State Teachers College was now doing double duty. Victor Kelley greeted him warmly, but then counseled: "You are a Mexican, you have to go to the Mexican consulate." Castro erupted: "I'm not a Mexican. I'm a U.S. citizen. I'm an American." Then he stormed out.

His timing for Stop No. 2 was fortuitous. Liberal Arts Dean Richard A. Harvill, who later became university president, was in a bind. A Spanish teacher had resigned at the last minute and fall classes were to begin a few days later. Castro pulled out his transcript, and then mentioned his selection to Phi Kappa Phi, an academic honorary society, and his bilingual performance for the State Department. A deal was struck that would last throughout his law student years.

It wasn't over yet. He went to enroll at the Law College and Dean J. Byron McCormick, also a future president, promptly told him: "I've heard about you, but you can't work and go to school," adding: "Besides, Mexican kids just can't do it, just can't cut it."

This time Castro called the school president, Alfred A. Atkinson, threatening to quit his job as a Spanish instructor if he could not enroll. Atkinson intervened. Castro was in. He and McCormick later became friends.

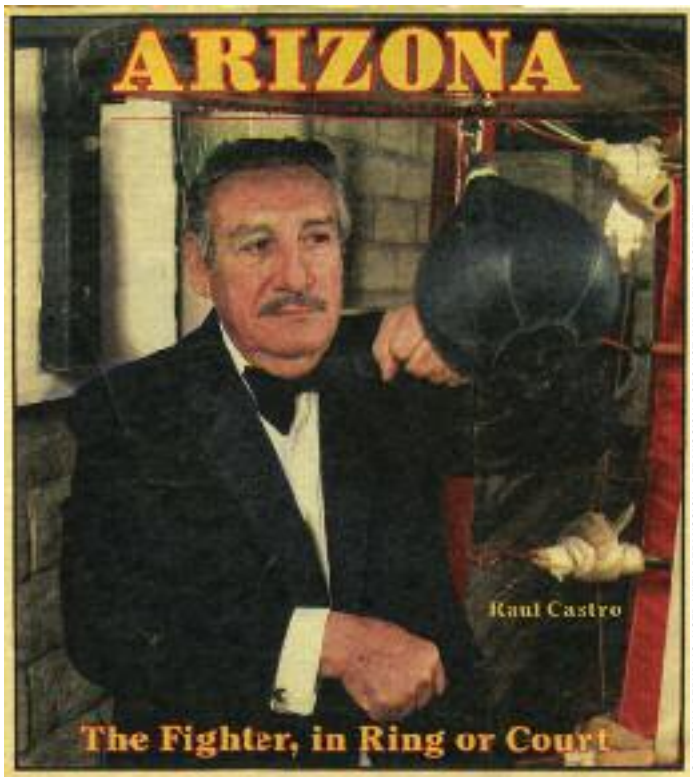
A sign on a downtown office did not signify an end to ethnic insults.

As a full-time instructor in the Spanish Department, Castro discovered that his professorial assignments were not always compatible with those of being a student. As a result, he took third-year courses in his first year, and vice versa. The mental stimulation and pressure never seemed to ease.

Castro's graduating class of 1949 included other significant Arizona names, and Hayzel B. Daniels, a frequent night-time study mate, was one of them. Daniels went on to become the first African American admitted to practice in Arizona.

After passing the bar, Castro lacked the cash to even rent an office in Tucson, and he contemplated a return to Douglas. But classmate John M. Favour, who still practices law in Prescott, learned of his predicament and urged him to stay in Tucson. "He pulled $500 right out of his pocket," Castro recalls, and said, "Pay me when you can." Favour helped obtain books for the office "to make me look like an intellectual." Favour also found a discarded fraternity paddle with the handle sawed off and presented it to Castro, who arranged for it to be adorned with the words: "Raúl H. Castro, Attorney at Law." The two proudly hung it at the front entrance.

A sign on a downtown office did not signify an end to ethnic insults and discrimination.



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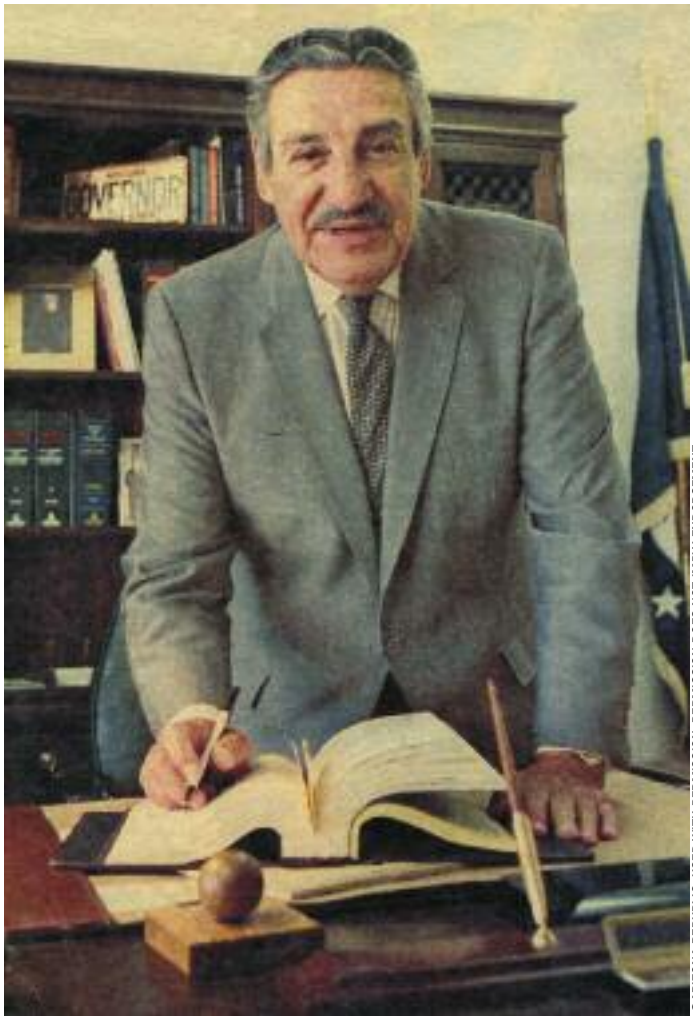
The Arizona Republic Magazine, Sunday, Oct. 16, 1983.



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Raúl H. Castro—The Early Years

For years, he and wife Pat raised horses and ponies at a farm on Tucson's River Road.

He remembers trips to the Greyhound Bus Depot to pick up incoming Mexican relatives. He wore cowboy boots and a straw hat—his usual weekend attire—and without fail, immigration officers would stop him for identification.

The Castros entered their horses in Phoenix shows and elsewhere. Pat Castro, who is of Irish heritage, always had to arrange for the motel lodging, he says. If he tried to do so, he would be told there were no vacancies.

Castro often recounts the time he was out in boots, straw hat and Levi's painting a white picket fence in front of their ranch.

"A car drove by, green car. It was immigration service, Border Patrol. Stopped the car, '¿Señor, tiene usted tarjeta?' I said, 'No.' '¿Well, por quien trabaja usted?' (For whom do you work?) I said, 'La señora (the lady of the house).' So when I saw they were ready to throw me in the paddy wagon, I said, 'Wait a minute, fellows. Didn't you see a sign in front of that gate that says Castro Pony Farm? I happen to be the Castro involved.' At that time, I was a Superior Court judge. 'Are you Judge Castro?' I said 'Yes.' 'Oh, geez.'"

It was the United Farm Workers union that adopted "Si, Se Puede" as a national rallying cry, but Raúl Castro had put the "yes, you can" philosophy into practice many years before.

Castro's classroom goal now is to motivate the young, and his message is simple: Get an education, and you, too, can do it.

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Above: Oct. 28, 1996: Former Arizona Govs. (from left) Jack Williams, Rose Mofford, Sam Goddard, Raúl Castro and Evan Mecham, photographed in front of the State Capitol complex.

Right: Jan. 6, 2003: Former Govs. Mofford and Castro say the Pledge of Allegiance during Janet Napolitano's inauguration as the 21st governor of Arizona.

Below: Feb. 16, 2006: Castro and Gov. Janet Napolitano at a reception for Castro at the State Capitol.

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Information for this article came primarily from an April 14, 2009, interview with Governor Castro in Nogales, Ariz., plus recollections of speeches and impressions gleaned over the years. In addition, the following sources were consulted:

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