

# The Houston Post

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## SALUTE TO A CIVIL RIGHTS WARRIOR

In May, we read numerous articles on the "Fiestas Patrias" reminding us about the great battle led and won by Mexican General Ignacio Zaragoza against the French troops in Puebla, Mexico, in 1862. While celebrating May 5 is an important tribute to our past Mexican heroes, we also should remember to honor our contemporary heroes presently in our midst working to improve the quality of life for Hispanics. Mexican-American attorney Isaiah D. Torres is one such hero.

Torres has won two landmark cases, one before the Supreme Court and the other before a federal court in Houston. In the Supreme Court case, Torres fought for and won the rights of the children of undocumented workers to receive an education. In 1987, he won another landmark case before a federal court in Houston, the first case won in the country using the anti-discrimination provision of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. In this federal class-action lawsuit, Torres challenged the dismissal of several maintenance workers based on their immigration status. Without receiving any type of compensation, he acquired the reinstatement of the workers with backpay.

Born in New Braunfels, this descendant of Mexican immigrants grew up aware of the problems and dilemmas faced by immigrants in the United States. During the time the case

was before the high court, Torres himself was struggling. His wife and children had to move in with her parents where they remained until after he completed working on the case.



Despite the hardships, Torres finally made it to the top as the Mexican-American attorney who won a case in Supreme Court. As reported by the Houston Chronicle in 1982, his "dream of ten years became the law of the land."

Torres received a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Houston in 1975 and his law degree from Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., in 1978. He has taught Immigration Law and Civil Rights Law at several universities and schools. Torres has also found the time to publish articles, law reviews, and present speeches dealing with civil rights issues.