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### 'Four Amigos' reborn? Ethnic activists attack federal budget cuts

By Russ Zabel



*King County Council member Larry Gossett (from left), Inter\*Im executive director Bob Santos, El Centro de la Raza executive director Roberto Maestas and new United Indians of All Tribes Foundation director Phil Lane Jr. Photo by Russ Zabel*

**A sense of 1960s-style activism was revived at a press conference in the Daybreak Star Indian Cultural Center in Discovery Park last week when a new version of the Four Amigos banded together to launch a blistering attack on proposed federal budget cuts.**

**The Amigos (a.k.a. Gang of Four) originally included Larry Gossett, now a King County council member; Bob Santos, now executive director of the non-profit Inter\*Im; Roberto Maestas, now executive director of El Centro de la Raza; and the late Bernie Whitebear, who**

**founded the United Indians of All Tribes Foundation.**

**Whitebear, a tireless Indigenous peoples' activist who once led an occupation of Fort Lawton, died from cancer in 2000. But Phil Lane Jr., the new UIATF director, simultaneously evoked the spirit of Whitebear and stood in for his old friend as he joined the other three Amigos at the Feb. 10 press conference.**

**Lane said the four of them represented a spiritual union of African, Asian, Latino and Indigenous communities, which in turn encompass 80 percent of the world's population including the Western Hemisphere.**

**He also said that unity of the four groups is needed to fight federal budget cuts that will affect social-service programs such as Head Start. The cuts, Lane charged, are being made to offset the costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan—costs that have risen to \$150,000 a minute. At the same time, he railed, the rich are getting more tax breaks.**

**Quoting his late uncle, Vine Deloria Jr., Lane said: "Our society will be judged in the future by how it cares for those in the dawn and the twilight of their lives."**



**Gossett said he was intrigued by the Deloria quote. "As an elected official, I genuinely agree with that statement," he said. Gossett also described the budget cuts made by Pres. George Bush as devastating to the most needy in society. "It needs to be challenged," he said of the trend.**

**Maestas was even more blunt. "The vision of the people at the White House is a recipe for disaster," he said. The rich are getting richer, while the poor are getting poorer, Maestas added. "This is a ticking time bomb in the nation."**

**Santos said the Four Amigos got together originally to make changes in a country that was not very sensitive to "Third World people." The changes included improvements in employment, education and housing. "We're still fighting for the same kinds of things," he said.**

**Santos also wondered why there was no outrage in the country about Bush's approach to social programs and about the alleged lies told to get the country involved in the Iraq war. "I'm outraged," he said. "I'll join any of you who want to sit in front of the White House."**

**Lane was cautiously-if not colorfully-optimistic that things will change for the better. "I hear the death pangs of an old world order," he intoned, "and the birth pangs of a new world order."**

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