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Work long and hard for what you know is right for society

In 700 BCE, the Greek farmer-poet Hesiod was stuck in a backwater as hard on farmers as the Texas Hill Country in the 19th century. Greedy local big men controlled power and perverted the rule of law.

Hesiod wondered about the same things we wonder about. Why do bad luck and bad people ruin the lives of good people? Why doesn't God — in his case, Zeus — bring about justice? Why is life so hard?

Hesiod saw only one answer: "There is no shame in hard work."

There was a little of Hesiod in President Barack Obama's message to the schoolchildren of our country. Many Americans share Hesiod's and Obama's belief in working long and hard for their futures and for what is right for society as a whole.

This quality of resolute persever-

ance was on display on Sept. 10 at the ceremony for community awards sponsored by the University of Texas at Austin at the Mexican American Cultural Center. In UT professor Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez whose U.S. Latino/a World War II Oral History Project celebrated its 10th anniversary. How important it is to capture for history the realities of those who gave so much for a country that treated them as second-class citizens. In Austin Police Chief Art Acevedo's commitment to making our police force supportive partners with all Austin neighborhoods and sensitive to Austin's cultural diversity. And in

educator-scholar Raymund Paredes' tireless efforts to improve education at all levels in our state, especially through the high school text he co-edited: "Mexican-American Authors." These community leaders were praised publicly. But what stuck with me was the praise I heard in many private conversations I had, for them and for the other recipients, Jesus Chávez, for 30 years an educator and now superintendent of Round Rock ISD, and Joe and Teresa Lozano Long. Their philanthropy has empowered human beings to educate themselves and give back to our community.

I had a long talk with educator

Leticia Hinojosa, an award-winning principal in 1997 at T.A. Brown School on Anderson Lane.

Hinojosa made clear what it took to "stand and deliver" in an area and school where gang violence, prostitution, drug use, poverty and broken homes prevailed. The values and behavior of parents sometimes made her feel deep sympathy for even the most hardened and violence-prone student.

Hinojosa had to overcome teacher and student apathy, administrative inflexibility and the widely shared feelings that the problems were too big to be overcome. She and willing

teachers and parents worked and worked and worked.

All these people embody the thoughts of Thomas Merton that inspire Ray Tapajna from Cleveland, Ohio, a tireless advocate for the forgotten common worker: "Do not depend on the hope of results. When you are doing the sort of work you have taken on, you may have to face the fact your work will be apparently worthless and even achieve no worth at all, if not perhaps, results opposite of what you expect. As you get used to this idea, you will start more and more to concentrate not on the results, but on the value, the rightness, the truth of the work itself."

See the problem. Do the work. Follow what is right and true. The results will be what they will be.
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