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## Dallas ISD trustees vote to name Pleasant Grove school for Adelfa Callejo

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By TAWNELL D. HOBBS and REBECCA SIMON / The Dallas Morning News  
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Dallas school trustees voted Thursday to name a school for attorney and civil-rights activist Adelfa Callejo after a discussion that touched on allegations of racism.

The board was split on the decision, with trustees Edwin Flores, Jack Lowe, Jerome Garza, Lew Blackburn and Nancy Bingham voting in support of the naming. Trustees Adam Medrano and Carla Ranger voted no, while trustees Leigh Ann Ellis and Ron Price abstained.

Callejo came under criticism last year for comments she made about then-presidential candidate Barack Obama. She said in a TV interview in February 2008 that "Obama simply has a problem that he happens to be black." Callejo's supporters say the comment was taken out of context.

"I wanted to hear what people had to say tonight," Blackburn said. "I know she's done a lot for Hispanic people. I wasn't going to hold that remark against her. She's done a lot for the history of Dallas. I don't see anything wrong about naming a school for someone who has shaped the history of Dallas."

Bingham, who nominated Callejo's name for the new Pleasant Grove campus, said her body of work should not be overshadowed by the comment. She called Callejo a pioneer of grassroots activism at Thursday's meeting.

"When Adelfa was out there on the streets picketing and marching, many people criticized her many times because she was a female, and other times because she was Hispanic," Bingham said. "Children need role models of people who are not going to give up."

Some board members, concerned about Callejo's comment, wanted to have a discussion with her before voting. But a motion to postpone the vote failed.

"I want to have that meeting to clear the air and bring our communities together," trustee Price said before the vote. "I want an opportunity to look into her face and have a conversation."

Shortly after making the comment last year, Callejo said it was in response to concerns from Hispanics that they would have reservations about voting for a black politician because of experiences in the Dallas area, including fights over funding in the Dallas Independent School District.

Michael Gonzales, Callejo's nephew and chairman of the Hispanic Leadership Forum, released an explanation last week clarifying her comment. He said she was simply trying to describe Obama's challenges in Texas. After the vote, Gonzales thanked the trustees who supported Callejo.

"Our family members and the Hispanic community salutes the leadership of Lew Blackburn and the courage of the board members that voted for Mrs. Callejo," he wrote. "It is appropriate to honor the legacy of the legendary Adelfa B. Callejo."

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