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Smithsonian Center for Latino Initiatives: Strategic Plan (2002-2007)

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THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION AND THE POLITICS OF CULTURAL REPRESENTATION: THE CASE OF U.S. LATINOS

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EXECUTIVE MANDATE

"As the largest museum complex in the world and the premier cultural institution in the United States, the Smithsonian plays a fundamental role in defining the parameters of our cultural identity. How the Smithsonian views U.S. Latinos is important to all Americans, because the Smithsonian helps determine how all Americans see themselves--and how the rest of the world views the United States...

By fully and accurately reflecting these contributions and mirroring the American mosaic, the Smithsonian can communicate to every visitor the nation's genuinely multicultural history and essence and its seminal accomplishments: creating a national unity of democratic values, while at the same time recognizing and celebrating its cultural diversity. This approach is entirely consistent with the motto of the United States, e pluribus Unum--one from many."

--Towards a Shared Vision: Latinos and the Smithsonian Institution

PARALLEL PATHS TO THE FUTURE
**Smithsonian Institution Mission**

The Smithsonian is committed to enlarging our understanding of the mosaic that is the American national identity by serving as the most extensive provider nationwide of authoritative experiences that connect the American people to their history and to their cultural and scientific heritages.

**Center for Latino Initiatives Mission**

The Smithsonian Center for Latino Initiatives' is committed to advancing knowledge and understanding of the contributions of Latinas and Latinos to U.S. history, music, arts, culture, science and society. The Center works to enhance the representation of Latino cultures in the museums, galleries, research, and educational units of the Smithsonian Institution.

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**OUR VISION**

A world-class center for Latino-focused programs, research, scholarships, and exhibitions, that enhance and advance the Smithsonian Institution's collections, resources, and exhibitions.

A technologically advanced center providing effective information and understanding of U.S. Latino contributions to history, music, arts, music, sciences and society.

**SMITHSONIAN CENTER FOR LATINO INITIATIVES**

**Background**

The Smithsonian Center for Latino Initiatives was authorized by the Regents of the Smithsonian Institution in 1997 and opened on August 10, 1998. Its mission is to advance the knowledge and understanding of Latino contributions to U.S. history, art, music, culture, and science. As part of the Smithsonian...
Institution, the Center provides access to enrichment programs using the Smithsonian collections, exhibitions, and programs as a venue for cross-cultural understanding, community dialogue and development. The Center promotes ongoing research in the field of Latino studies and culture, and provides national audiences with educational exhibitions, public programs, and online and electronic resources. The Center also reaches out to the vast Latino community of the United States by building dialogue and relationships between the Smithsonian Institution and civic, social, and cultural organizations, and colleges and universities. The Center works with government agencies, corporations, and foundations to foster the development of programming to highlight the rich Latino cultural heritage.

The Center has a Director, Deputy Director, Administrative Officer and Assistant, Development Officer, and three managers with cross-cultural experience, fluency in Spanish and English, and expertise in program development. The operations of the center are organized into themes:

1. Latin Music and Historical Traditions;
2. Latino Arts and Culture;
3. Latino Research, Outreach and Educational Resources.

An important function of the Center is the administration of the Latino Initiatives Fund. The Latino Initiatives Fund was established in 1995 by the United States Congress as a special line of annual appropriations to the Smithsonian Institution for Latino programming. This has amounted to nearly one million dollars per annum since FY95. Units of the Smithsonian Institution submit proposals to request funds for Latino focused programs, exhibitions, collections management, and research at the Smithsonian.

History of the Center

In 1993, the Smithsonian Institution established a 15-member task force on Latino issues, charged with recommending changes in policy and procedures to ensure that programs at the Smithsonian reflect the nation's cultural diversity, and increasing the participation of Hispanics at all levels and in all activities of the Institution. In May 1994, the Task Force issued its report, Willful Neglect: The Smithsonian Institution and U.S. Latinos, which concluded "the Institution almost entirely excludes and ignores Latinos in nearly every aspect of its operations." The report offered a blueprint for significant change, emphasizing that "The Smithsonian must commit itself to making Latino initiatives a permanent part of the Institution, and Latino experts—in sciences, art, history and technology—a permanent presence" within the Institution.
Soon after the report was issued, I. Michael Heyman became Secretary of the Smithsonian. In his installation address in September 1994, he made inclusiveness one of three identified priorities. Under his leadership, the Smithsonian established the “Latino Initiatives Fund” to seed and encourage Latino initiatives, hired a permanent Counselor for Community Affairs and Special Projects, and appointed a Latino Oversight Committee to advise the Smithsonian on the implementation of Task Force recommendations.

The Oversight Committee was comprised of 14 members including: seven Latinos from outside the Smithsonian (three of them from the original Task Force). Four Latino Congress members and the Task Force Chair served as ex officio members. Participating from inside the Institution were the Counselor for Community Affairs and the head of the Latino Working Committee of Latino employees who served as observers.

In 1997, the Oversight Committee issued a report, “Towards A Shared Vision: U.S Latinos and the Smithsonian Institution.” The report was presented to the Board of Regents on May 5, 1997. The Smithsonian Center for Latino Initiatives was formally established by vote of the Board of Regents, the Smithsonian’s governing body, in May 1997. The report of the Board of Regents stated:

The Latino presence in the Americas is centuries old, culturally rich and demographically vast and growing. The Center is dedicated to the generation of new knowledge...to the end that American history and culture may be understood and displayed in all its diversity.

The Center opened its doors on August 10 1998 with Dr. Refugio I. Rochin appointed its first Director. In January 1999, the Regents of the Smithsonian Institution authorized the establishment of the Smithsonian National Board for Latino Initiatives comprised of twenty-five members. The Board’s purpose is to promote, fund and advise on Latino initiatives across the Smithsonian Institution. Its business is administered through the Center. Today, the Smithsonian Center for Latino Initiatives continues to be a dynamic presence within the Smithsonian Institution.

**OUR CHALLENGE:** To build on the past and present.

**The Past**

The Center is devoted primarily to advancing knowledge and understanding of Latinos who live and work in the United States and its territories. Latino heritage is centuries old and the foundation for many traditions and features of this nation.
The Hispanic presence in the United States can be traced back to 1492 with Christopher Columbus’ trip to the new world and his discovery of the Island of Santa Cruz, present day St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands. The historic presence of Hispanics in U.S. territory began with the exploration of Puerto Rico by Juan Ponce de León in 1508 and his subsequent exploration of Florida in 1513. Following in his footsteps, Spanish explorers Alonso Alvarez Pineda discovered the Gulf of Mexico in 1519; Francisco Gordillo explored the Atlantic coast from Florida to Virginia in 1520; Lucas Vasquez Ayllón established the first Spanish mission in present day Georgia in 1524; Esteban Gómez sailed the Bahía de San Cristobal, present day New York Harbor, and the Río de San Antonio, present day Hudson River in 1525; Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca explored the Southwest between 1528-1536; Fortún Jimenez reached the tip of Baja California in 1533; Francisco Vasquez de Coronado explored the Southwest in 1540; and Pedro Menéndez de Avilés founded the first permanent European settlement in the United States in 1565, namely, St. Augustine, Florida, forty-two years before the establishment of the first British settlement in Virginia by John Smith in 1607.

In 1521, Hernan Cortes, with the aid of Indian soldiers, encountered and defeated Mexico’s Aztec forces. Cortes then sent men to look for the fabled California with its pearls, gold, and silver. From that time on-ward, Hispanics led further explorations into the southwest of the United States and referred to the region as New Spain, encompassing Texas through California and as far north as Utah and Colorado. They developed a three-pronged approach that included, first, the spread of Christianity through a chain of missions, second, the establishment of military security through the presidios and, third, civilian population growth through the pueblos. Thus, Hispanics founded many cities and systems of roads and commerce of vital national importance today. In California, for example, the first two towns established were San Jose (1777), and Los Angeles (1781); the presidios were San Diego (1769), Monterey (1770), San Francisco (1776), and Santa Barbara (1782.) The colonizers and descendants of these efforts became known as the Californios. Similarly in New Mexico, Santa Fe became a regional capital of the Spanish expansion and, in Texas, San Antonio became legendary with the Spanish built Alamo mission.

There are many Hispanic firsts in the United States: the first adventure books, first maps, and fascinating ethnographies of American Indians. Spaniards were first in 24 of the states, including: Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, Arizona, Nevada, California, Oregon, Washington, Alaska (after the Russians) and Hawaii. What’s more, the Spanish flag flew within the mainland from 1513 to 1821, a period of over 300 years. Add the time that Mexico ruled in the Southwest, 1821 to 1848, and we can see that the Spanish and Mexican hold on U.S. land spanned 335 years.
The Present

Americans, including Latinos, often know little about the country's Hispanic heritage. Yet, Latinos have contributed significantly to every phase and aspect of American history and culture. However, as both the first and many of the most recent immigrants to the United States, Latinos suffer from the invisibility of their long-term contributions and the negative prejudice associated with their immigration. Making the Smithsonian Latino-inclusive is a critical aspect of making the Smithsonian inclusive of all the cultural communities contributing to its strength.

The need for inclusiveness becomes more urgent as the U.S. population becomes more diverse—and as a national ambivalence about pluralism and immigration become increasingly evident. Americans enjoy many of the manifestations of their diversity, yet many Americans also fear today's new Americans. The Smithsonian has a crucial role to play in allaying these fears by helping Americans to understand the roles of generations of past immigrants in the development and defense of U.S. democracy.

A nation of immigrants for which indigenous people account for less than 1% of the population. The United States is among the most diverse societies on earth. It has truly global roots—European, African, Asian, and indigenous American—and is becoming even more pluralistic.

Nationally, the number of Hispanics grew by 60 percent from 1990 to 2000 to 35.5 million people. That is about 3 million more Hispanics than the Census Bureau had predicted, bringing the Hispanic population roughly equal to that of African Americans. Today, Latinos represent about 13 percent of the U.S. population. Latinos are projected to comprise more than one-half of the national population growth between 2000 and 2030.

With U.S. Latinos generating nearly $600 billion gross earnings in 2000, the opportunities for expanding Smithsonian endeavors shows considerable promise. According to recent reports, the Hispanic purchasing power will grow three times as fast as other groups, reaching $2 trillion by 2020. Based on the growth of Spanish language radio, periodical and web sites, it is apparent that Latinos want more information and understanding of their population. It is also apparent that Latino families will want more information and knowledge about Latino history, art and culture within the U.S. and the national interest in related Smithsonian research, technical assistance and exhibitions has been strong. An article in US News and World Report, May 1998, identified 17 different culturally distinct populations of Latinos. They include, for example,
transnational indigenous Latinos that speak Nahuatl, Mayan, Quechua and other languages before Spanish.

Latino complexity is increasing so quickly that Latinos themselves are often not aware of the range of identities, histories, interests or issues of U.S. Latinos. When we address the characteristics of Latinos, racially, culturally and linguistically, we will proudly point out that Latinos are multi-racial and multi-cultural in every case. In fact, one of the biggest challenges we face as a Center for Latino Initiatives is that of being inclusive while at the same time establishing significant programs of interest to the general public.

OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

The staff of the Smithsonian Center for Latino Initiatives provides leadership and coordination by:

- Identifying the needs and interests of U.S. Latino organizations, establishing partnerships, and creating exhibitions and public programs that address those needs and interests.
- Generating information and expertise in connecting Latinas/os to the Smithsonian’s resources, including collections, exhibitions, and educational programs.
- Offering strategies to enhance the Smithsonian experience in diverse settings, including museums, educational institutions, and cultural events to serve and address Latino communities.
- Creating public programs that make the Center and the Smithsonian Institution a national resource for lifelong learning.
- Building partnerships and collaborations between diverse communities inside and outside the Smithsonian.

To fulfill our mission and vision, the Smithsonian Center for Latino Initiatives will achieve four goals:

1. Public Impact
2. Quality Research
3. Management Excellence
4. Financial Strength
Goal 1: Public Impact

The Smithsonian Center for Latino Initiatives provides leadership and coordination of Latino programs and events throughout the Smithsonian Institution to enlarge audiences and expand outreach and engagement with the public.

The Center’s greatest impact in the next five years will be through collaborative efforts that combine the expertise of professionals inside and outside the Smithsonian to create new and innovative public programs, exhibitions and educational materials.

The Center will take the following approaches to Public Impact:

- Develop programs that reach and serve Latino communities nationwide.
- Partner with regional and national Latino communities to expand outreach capabilities and the impact of individual programs.
- Develop and use state-of-the-art technology to deliver programs and exhibitions.
- Respond to public inquiries about Latino programs at the Smithsonian.

Public Impact: Objective 1
Sponsor or co-sponsor exhibitions, public programs, and publications that reach greater numbers of Latinos nationwide.

Strategies

1. Develop a 5-year exhibition program, both virtual and physical
2. Develop and coordinate with Smithsonian units a 5-year plan for public programs
3. Develop national symposia and forums in connection with Latino programs at the Smithsonian
4. Increase exhibitions through collaboration and use of web technology
5. Publish in print and online conference proceedings, research, findings, and exhibition catalogs.

Public Impact: Objective 2
Promote fuller exploration, description, and utilization of Smithsonian collections.

Strategies
1. Index & Catalog Latino collections in Smithsonian Institution museums, libraries and research units.
2. Examine curatorial records from each museum to have clearer knowledge of objects.
3. Establish a dialogue with SI units and museums directors for optimal application Latino Initiatives Fund to develop and expand public programs highlighting Latino collections and exhibitions.
4. Establish collaborations with Smithsonian Affiliates’ Latino Alliance.

Public Impact: Objective 3
Foster a systematic flow of information about Latino related activities throughout the Smithsonian.

Strategies

1. Develop calendar of Latino events at the Smithsonian.
2. Circulate information on events through mailing lists, e-mail lists, and website.
3. Produce press releases and disseminate to appropriate media organizations.

Public Impact: Objective 4
Provide link among Smithsonian Latino related activities in research, exhibition, and educational outreach

Strategies

1. Increase and strengthen proposals to the Latino Initiatives Fund.
2. Provide online information on current Latino research, programs, and educational opportunities developed by all SI units.
3. Provide opportunities for Smithsonian scholars to affiliate with Center.

Public Impact: Objective 5
Provide greater access to all interested in the Center’s programs.

Strategies

1. Develop and maintain ongoing relationships with schools, educational institutions, and community organizations throughout the nation.
2. Develop educational materials and programs for school groups.
3. Provide interface between the Smithsonian and outside constituents.
4. Work with educators to develop curricula.
5. Develop and cultivates new audiences.
6. Provide materials for teachers and educators.
Public Impact: Objective 6
Promote resources and programs of the Smithsonian Institution.

Strategies

1. Promote SI Latino programming through various venues: web site, media advisories, printed materials, phone calls, and promotional packets in both English and Spanish
2. Publish guides and indexes to Smithsonian Latino collections
3. Feature SI programs and resources on the web site and provide links to SI units
4. Develop and maintain networks of relationship with museums, community organizations and educational institutions

Public Impact: Objective 7
Sponsor or co-sponsor national and international seminars, conferences, and symposia aimed at greater understanding.

Strategies

1. Identify emerging topics and programs of national interest.
2. Develop interdisciplinary seminars, workshops and conferences on Latino cultural representation and museum practice.
3. Publish conferences and seminars proceedings.

Goal 2: Quality Research

CONDUCTS WORLD CLASS RESEARCH TO GENERATE AND PROMOTE KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF LATINOS TO U.S. HISTORY, ART, MUSIC, AND CULTURE.

Will foster and facilitate the work of researchers in the fields related to Latino studies using Smithsonian collections. Through appropriate and comprehensive research, the Center staff will be able to:

- Facilitate collection development by units.
- Contribute research for the development of exhibitions and educational materials.
- Provide opportunities for internships and fellowships.
• Sponsor or co-sponsor national and international seminars, conferences, and symposia that improve understanding of Latinas/os.
• Facilitate research opportunities.

Quality Research: Objective 1
Generate and advance knowledge in fields related to Latino studies.

Strategies

1. Establish research programs in Latino history, art, music, and culture.

2. Create advisory committees for exhibitions and programs.
3. Organize and manage fellowship and internship programs.
4. Participate in national organizations of Latino and ethnic studies.

Quality Research: Objective 2
Sponsor and co-sponsor scholars as visiting fellows and research associate facilitating their access to Smithsonian collections and staff and optimizing their contributions to the work of the Smithsonian.

Strategies

1. Organize fellowship programs for undergraduate, graduate and postdoctoral scholars in collaboration with SI units
2. Organize visiting scholars program.

Quality Research: Objective 3
Develop and implement mutually beneficial partnerships with Smithsonian staff and units.

Strategies

1. Identify SI projects and programs with Latino content.
2. Develop collaborations within Smithsonian units for research and public programs.
3. Develop collaborative research programs.
Quality Research: Objective 4
Facilitate collections acquisition by units.

Strategies

1. Identify collections and facilitate conversation between private collectors and SI curators.
2. Involve SI curators and collections managers in Center’s exhibitions and loan processes to provide an opportunity for negotiations of long-term loans, gifts or acquisitions.
3. Connect Smithsonian units with collectors and provide acquisition opportunities.

Quality Research: Objective 5
Serve as a specialized intellectual and practical resource for Smithsonian personnel.

Strategies

1. Promote research and publications in Latino Studies.
2. Develop reference collection with books and periodicals for use by Smithsonian staff and visiting scholars.
3. Serve as member of curatorial teams, fellowship selection committees, advisory groups, and conference planning.

Goal 3: Management Excellence

BRING CENTER’S MANAGEMENT TO A LEVEL OF QUALITY COMPARABLE TO THAT EXPECTED OF THE SMITHSONIAN AT LARGE.

The Center will work to establish policies and procedures that will enable it to function with a minimum of personnel but with optimum results. Effective management of human resources issues, budget issues, and the Latino Initiatives Fund will guarantee a smooth and effective operation.

The Center’s staff will work in conjunction with the Office of the Under Secretary for American Museums and National Programs to ensure unified operations, and efficient operations.

Management Excellence: Objective 1
Strengthen the link between the Center for Latino Initiatives and the different Smithsonian museums and units that receive funding from the Latino Initiatives Fund.

Strategies

1. Maintain a regular dialogue with units and museums directors for better application and use of the Latino Initiatives Fund.
2. Identify similar programs performed by different units to establish collaborations for better utilization of funds.

Management Excellence: Objective 2
Improve the management and effectiveness of the Smithsonian Center for Latino Initiatives.

Strategies

1. Complete hiring process for open positions
2. Ensure appropriate staff training
3. Establish clear areas of responsibility for the management team
4. Establish appropriate career opportunities.
5. Timely completion of performance plans and appraisals.

Goal 4: Financial Strength

PROVIDES THE FINANCIAL STRENGTH NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE THE CENTER’S GOALS.

In order to fulfill the Center's mission and vision, we need to address the financial needs through several objectives:

- Has Fund Raising Plan
- Works With Smithsonian Institution Development Office
- Has Board Support for Fund Raising.
- Is Financially Stable and Accountable

Financial Strength: Objective 1
Develop prospect base for financial support of the Center's programs and related activities.

Strategies
1. Prepare and update annual plan for fund raising.
2. Effectively engages advice and support from members of the Smithsonian Institution National Board for Latino Initiatives.
3. Identify individuals, corporations, and foundations that fund Latino related projects.
4. Develop fund raising mailing list for Center.
5. Work with Development Central to identify funding opportunities.
6. Create a systematic promotion/development campaign.
7. Maintain effective fund-raising strategies.

Financial Strength: Objective 2
Develop a financially accountable system.

Strategies

1. Provide monthly reports to Center’s management team.
2. Provide timely and accurate information to SI Central in all financial matters.
3. Respond to calls for budget and proposals in a timely manner.
4. Develop competency for work with financial reporting system.
5. Prepares and posts annual report on Center activities, expenses and public impact.
6. Shows effective and timely implementation of the Center’s Strategic Plan.