

NEWS AND PROFILES CONNECTING THE LATINO AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN MINNESOTA

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**LATINO
AMERICANS
CELEBRATE
4TH OF JULY**



A Fourth of July Tradition: Immigrants Around the Country Take the Oath of Citizenship

By E.J. Aguado Jr.

Nearly three dozen immigrants, ages 18 to 57, became U.S. citizens in a ceremony on Friday honoring the Fourth of July. Thousands did the same in the last week around the United States and the world.

The Fourth of July weekend is a special time for Americans, with barbecues and fireworks in full effect across the country, commemorating the independence of our nation.

But for many residents, the holiday weekend holds a particularly special significance.

On Friday, National Guard member Paola Sánchez was one of 35 immigrants who were sworn in as United States citizens in a ceremony held at the historic Fraunces Tavern Museum in Manhattan's Financial District in honor of Independence Day.

A third of the new United States citizens were Latinos.

"I am so grateful to this country because it helped give me a lot of opportunities that I didn't have in my country," said Sánchez, who emigrated from Colombia five years ago to study English, and who is expecting twin girls. "So it is very important to me to be an American."

The journey to becoming a United States citizen was not easy for her. Sánchez, 26, was unable to complete the naturalization process in basic training, as is the norm, because of, among other issues, her pregnancy.

Sánchez said she is especially honored that her daughters will be born United States citizens because "that means that they are going to have all the opportunities that I didn't have when I was in my country."

Sánchez was one of five members of the U.S. military who were among the 35 newly sworn citizens. Legal permanent residents, often called "green card holders," have a long tradition of serving in the U.S. military. About 17,000 so-called "green card soldiers" are in active duty.

The 35 new citizens ranged in age from 18 to 57, and hailed from the following 18 countries: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, The People's Republic of China, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Germany, Honduras, India, Jamaica, Lebanon, Nigeria, Philippines, Russia, South Africa, St. Kitts-Nevis, United Kingdom, and Venezuela.

More than 24,000 immigrants were slated to become U.S. citizens at approximately 350 ceremonies held across the country and around the world from June 27 to July 4, according to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

Along with Sánchez, Iván Saragusti, an Argentinian immigrant, took the oath of citizenship in Manhattan.



New United States citizens taking oath

Saragusti, 21, has been in this country almost 11 years, saying he originally came to seek opportunity and pursue a happier, safer life.

He is grateful to the United States for this opportunity, and said he is excited to be able to play a role in democracy, and "vote, hopefully, for President Obama's second term."

He decided to pursue citizenship to "assume responsibility for a country that's provided many good things for me, and I also love the opportunity to be part of such a country."

Saragusti said he was intrigued by the ceremony.

"It's a very special moment," he said, "for anyone who has the opportunity to take part in such a ceremony, and quite rewarding."

Nearly eight million of the estimated 12.5 million legal permanent residents living in the United States are eligible to file for naturalization, according to the most recent Department of Homeland Security analysis. In May, the USCIS unveiled a federal initiative to raise awareness about the rights, responsibilities and importance of U.S. citizenship.

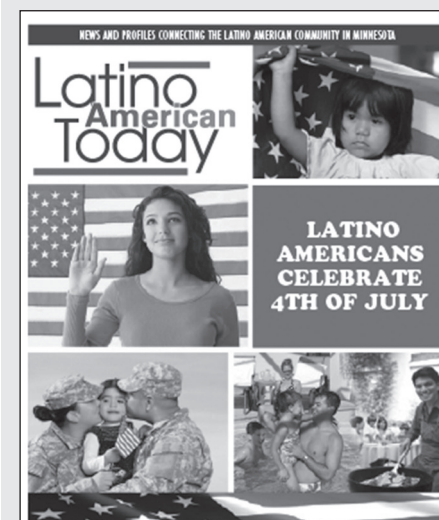
Friday's ceremony was an emotional one, as naturalization events tend to be. It took place at the very same site where George Washington gave his famous farewell speech to his soldiers nine days after the British left American soil amid the triumphant revolution. Friday marked the first time a naturalization ceremony had been held at the historic landmark.

USCIS New York Director Andrea Quarantillo administered the Oath of Allegiance.

When the ceremony concluded, in less than hour after it began, Sánchez held her citizenship certificate, beaming with pride.

She planned to celebrate her first Fourth of July as a United States citizen by travelling to Connecticut with her husband to visit family.

"I love the army, I love America, I'm just grateful," she said.



On The Cover
Latino Americans Celebrate 4th of July

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Miss Teen Latina Minnesota Crowned at the Union Depot

By Claud Santiago

18 year old Gabby Nelson, of Mendota Heights was crowned 2014 Miss Teen Latina Minnesota on June 1, at a program and ceremony held at the Union Depot in St. Paul. Gabby won over four other talented Latina candidates.

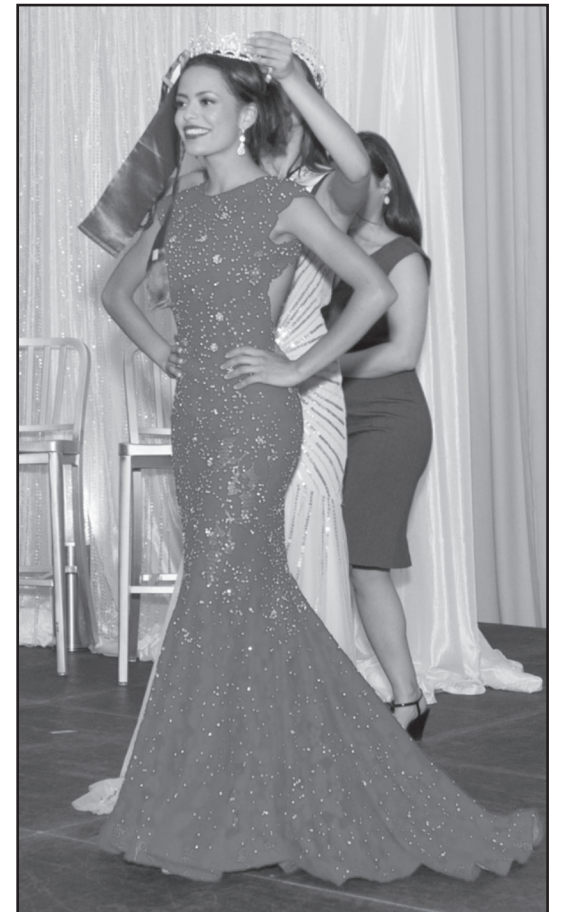
Her mother, Alex Nelson, who is a realtor in the Twin Cities area, was surprised her daughter wanted to be involved in the competition. "Gabby always said she was not interested in pageants so when she told me she wanted to enter this event I was surprised but thought it would be interesting and fun for her." Like her daughter, Alex Nelson was crowned with a tiara of her own in a pageant in her native Dominican Republic in 1988. A talented artist, Gabby began dancing in kindergarten, and at 10 years old, began to take it more seriously and started training at the Classical Ballet Academy in St. Paul. She danced for Ballet Minnesota and landed a lead role as Clara in "The Nutcracker." At 13, she auditioned for the School of American Ballet in New York City and was accepted into the school's summer intensive program winning one of the 200 spots over 2,000 that auditioned.

In her first two years in high school Nelson attended the St. Paul Conservatory of Performing Artists and also trained and danced with the Minnesota Dance Theatre in Minneapolis. In her junior year, Nelson relocated to Florida to participate in the pre-professional program of the Miami City Ballet School. The instructors there felt that Nelson had the talent to be a prima ballerina. Soon Nelson was at a point where she needed to decide if she wanted to be a professional ballerina and take on all the challenges and work it would take to make it in the dance world. She had devoted so much of her youth to dance and while she still loved ballet, decided to explore other things she had missed out on.

Gabby moved back to Minnesota for her senior year in 2013, completed her high school requirements at an online public school and spent two months as a volunteer at a children's day camp in the Dominican Republic. This led to the decision to be involved in the pageant. "I wanted to get involved and explore my Hispanic heritage and share my passion for dance with others before I leave for college next Fall," Nelson explained.

The Hispanic community needs strong, educated, and confident Latinas and that's what the 2014 Miss Teen Latina Minnesota represents. Congratulations to Gabby and good luck to her in the future.

The pageant was produced by Carolina Reyes the 2010 Miss Minnesota International. Well done!



Miss Teen Latina 2014 Gabby Nelson

Independent Candidate for Minnesota State Representative District 62A

By Claud Santiago

Yolandita Colon wants to bring a new and younger voice to the Constituents of District 62A. Colon wants to represent their needs in our State Legislature. "I believe that I can better relate to the people and understand their needs. I know their struggles and their challenges, especially for those New Americans. I want to protect and improve their economic and social ability to achieve their individual goals, so that they can provide a better life for themselves and their struggling families," Colon stated.

"I want to see Educational Equality in our school systems, so that every child has the same opportunity to maximize their full potential and abilities in our society, rather than turning to crime as way of life. I want to see social justice in our government and support meaningful Immigration Reform. I want to work with entrepreneurs and small business owners to improve ways to create more jobs and stimulate economic growth," commented Colon.

Yolandita Colon is a Licensed Minister of the Assemblies of God. She is the NHCLC Minnesota Chapter Director. The NHCLC (www.nhclc.org) serve the nation's largest Christian Hispanic organization by representing, serving, and unifying the Hispanic evangelical community within their state chapter. Additionally, as an NHCLC Chapter director she engages in prophetic activism by organizing and facilitating an annual Hispanic Prayer Breakfast that includes Governor of the state, elected officials, Hispanic Pastors, resource pastors and leaders with education grants and leadership training. This helps bring attention and awareness to social problems, which in turn encourages people to take action, to get involved and to work together to find meaningful long-term solutions to these social problems.

Yolandita has a Bachelor's of Science degree in Music with a concentration in Voice and a minor in Piano and Bible from Southwest Missouri State University and North Central University in Minneapolis, MN.

Yolandita is currently the Executive Justice Pastor at Maranatha Minneapolis Church and co-pastor with her husband, Rev. Herman Colon.

She has been happily married to Herman for 20 years and has two children ages 14 and 10. She was born in Brooklyn, NY from Puerto Rican Parents.

We wish the best of luck to Yolandita!



Yolandita Colon

3 Practical Daily Tips to Improve Your Brain and Muscle Plasticity

By Michael Gonzalez-Wallace

1. Be super smart and exercise your heart

Exercise 1: 15 minutes daily brisk walking or jogging

Cardiovascular activity not only helps us to be physically fit and prevent cardiovascular disease, but it also promotes neuronal growth and helps us get smarter. Kinesiology Professor Charles Hillman from Illinois University found that when you exercise your heart, you also improve your BDNF levels, a protein that enhances neuronal growth improving our cognitive abilities.

2. Brain plasticity and movement

Exercise 2: From a standing position, start clapping your hands and tapping your feet for twenty seconds. Then, pick up some light hand weights and alternate raising your opposite arm and leg for 2 minutes.

Muscles don't move by themselves; they need specific sections of the brain to help them move. Motor circuits are the networks of nerve cell connections that enable us to

perform the full range of our daily movements. Challenge your brain with movement. If you move two muscle groups at once you need to think about it right? You will also be using more brain areas.

3. Agility and balance exercises

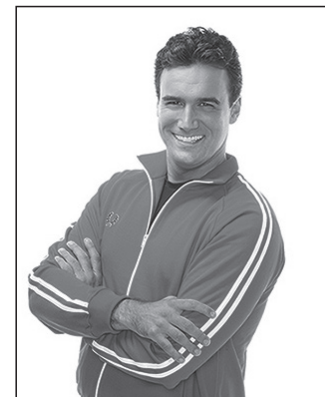
Exercise 3: From a standing position, raise one leg up and toss an object into the air, like a tennis ball or a sponge.

Catch it ten times then change legs.

Agility and balance are two of the most important daily activities to enhance our brain muscle connection. When we age, we see how we are not as agile or balanced as before.

Use it or lose it. Challenge that beautiful brain of yours and get ready to feel like never before. Life is about choices and this tips should be on top of your list.

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Michael Gonzalez-Wallace

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Vergara v. California: A Big Win for Students and Teachers

By Jovan Agee

Across the country, students and teachers are celebrating. In his decision in *Vergara v. California*, Judge Rolf M. Treu affirmed that California's students have a constitutional right to educational equality.

This ruling is a huge win for kids and teachers in the Golden State.

The journey towards this decision began in May 2012, when nine courageous public school students filed a lawsuit in Los Angeles Superior Court. They challenged several statutes that forced schools and districts to push out great teachers and retain ineffective ones—thus directly harming students.

For instance, state law required that, in the unfortunate case of layoffs, the last teacher hired be the first teacher fired—regardless of the teacher's effectiveness. Known as "last-in, first-out" (LIFO), this policy guarantees that great teachers will be taken away from the students who need them.

Additionally, the plaintiffs challenged laws that awarded tenure before teachers showed a track record of success and made it nearly impossible to remove ineffective teachers from the classroom.

It's easy to see how these laws deny students the right to equal educational opportunity. Research shows that teacher quality is the most important in-school factor affecting student achievement. Therefore, if we want to maximize student achievement, we need the best teachers in our classrooms. And the statutes that were challenged in *Vergara* worked directly against that goal.

It's no surprise, then, that the case has kick-started a desperately needed national conversation on the structural flaws of our public education system. For far too long, harmful and illogical policies have persisted simply because they were considered politically untouchable. It is my sincere hope that we will ride this momentum and work towards making the reforms necessary to ensure that every student receives a great education.

The nine brave plaintiffs and Students Matter deserve our gratitude for filing this case. Challenging powerful groups that are committed to preserving the status quo is a daunting task.

***Editors Note: Minnesota is one of only 11 states to support LIFO policies. Help us change this harmful policy in Minnesota by visiting: <http://www.StudentsFirst.org/Minnesota>.**

Jovan Agee currently serves as the State Director for StudentsFirst California. He has previously worked as director of political and legislative affairs for a local labor organization in his home state. Agee holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in government from California State University, Sacramento.



Jovan Agee

Outstanding Young Latina Graduates High School with Honors

By Rick Aguilar

Minnesota has the depressing distinction of having the highest drop-out rate for high school Latinos in the country. So it's wonderful to feature this outstanding young Latina, Estela Mejia.

Latino American Today recently met with Estela Mejia, who arrived in Minnesota only 6 years ago from Honduras, with her family. Estela recently graduated from high school as the Number #1 Valedictorian in her school and a GPA of 3.98. She gave the keynote commencement speech and honored God for her success. *Latino American Today* asked her the following questions:

***LAT: How did you overcome the language barrier when you started school in the U.S. (Minnesota)**

I overcame the language barrier by staying after school with my teachers in middle school. Also during classes I would listen to books and also read vocabulary books with images. I did not sit in the cafeteria with the other kids, I went to my teacher's classroom and ate there while watching movies in English. My teacher put on movies that I knew in Spanish so that when I heard in English I would know what was said. Lastly, I remember that my dad made my brother and me translate a paragraph of a book every night by using the dictionary and then read it to him.

***LAT: What or who motivated you to study and have the success you've had.**

The most important person is God. I know that he always wants the best for me and that through the struggles that I went through he was with me. My family always told me to study to become someone and I have seen how hard they have worked to bring the bread to the table every day and when it was time to pay a bill how hard it has been for them to have the money. My family has motivated me because I said to myself, "When I grow up I want to give back to them and make their situation better. I want to be that daughter that makes them proud and they can rely on."

***LAT: What are you plans for the future with your education.**

My plan in the future is to become an immigration lawyer. My grandfather use to ask me what I wanted to be and my answer was, to be a lawyer. When I arrived in the United States and saw the struggles of my Latino community with this issue, I decided to become an immigration lawyer. So I will be attending the University of Minnesota to study Pre-Law and then to Law School.

"There are two reasons that I decided to stay for schooling in Minnesota. The first one is because my church is here and the second one is to be close to my family. I think it was not the time to go far for these two reasons and that God will say when the correct time to leave is," stated Mejia.



Estela Mejia



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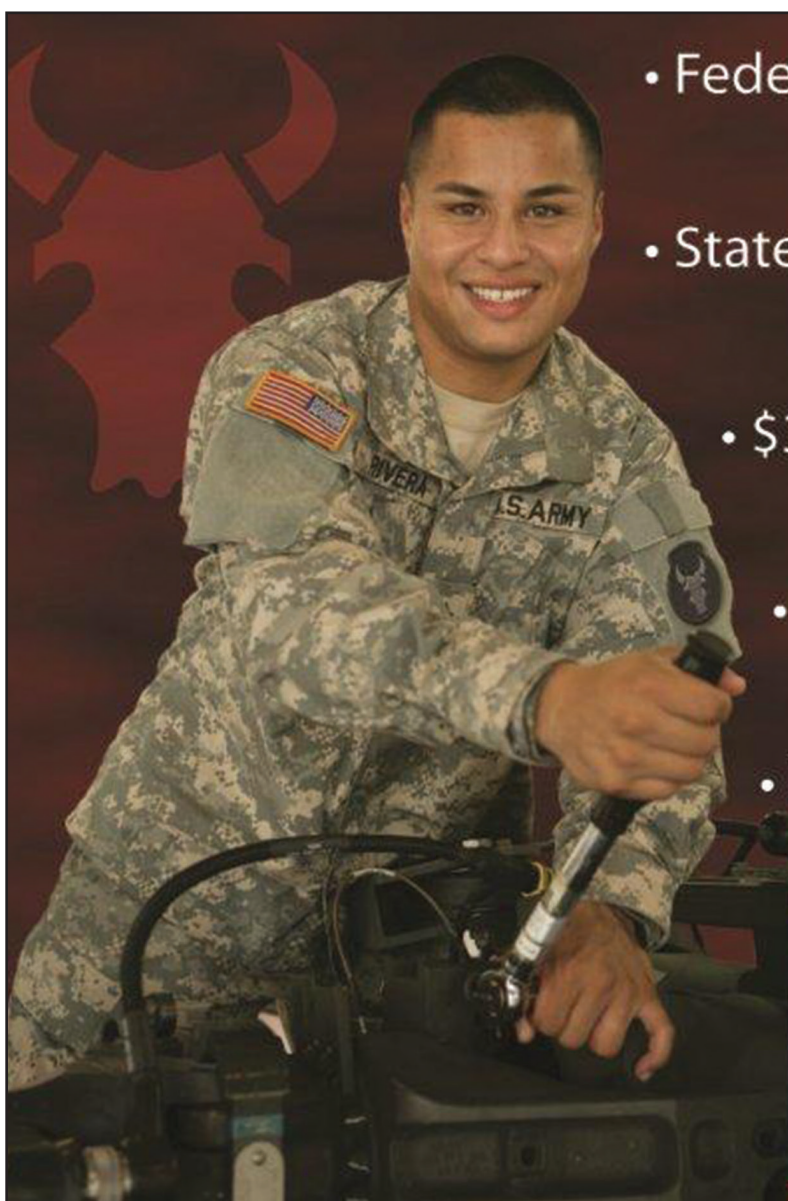
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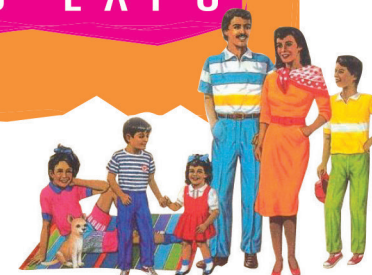
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Spice Up Your Summer

By Award-winning Author and Chef Amalia Moreno-Damgaard

Summer is finally here and with warm weather, outdoor activities abound at the cabin, lake, camp, and everywhere. Cookouts bring us closer together and in harmony with nature. Grilling with friends and family simply creates an easygoing vibe that invites good eating.

Outdoor cooking is the perfect excuse for casual entertaining. Try cooking bison burgers (view this and –and other recipes- online in June’s issue), adobo chicken, or roasting a favorite cut of meat. Side dishes can be grilled corn (without the husks) rubbed with salt and lime; a simple salad made with tomatoes, avocado, a sprinkle of Mexican oregano, crumbled queso fresco, red onion, red vinegar and olive oil; and quick and easy salsas and sauces.

Delicious raw, grilled and roasted salsas and sauces can spice up your picnic table, as they are hard to resist. The secret to great salsa making is starting with very fresh ingredients. Salsas and sauces can elevate a delicious steak to a five-star status or can also become a delicious appetizer. Salsas can dress salads, marinate proteins, make a great fondue, and more. In Latin America, the term salsa is used for both raw or cooked sauces and salsas whether they are pureed or chunky.

Herbs and spices can also be a part of fresh and chunky sauces as well as fresh and dried sweet and hot chile peppers, oils, vinegars, orange, and lemon and lime juices. The combinations are many but it takes a good palate to reach the right sazón (balance in flavors). The magic ingredient in a great salsa (and any dish) is seasoning. Salt and pepper are basic but very important seasonings. Seasoning goes hand in hand with tasting as one cannot possibly know how much to adjust flavors without actually tasting.

This summer I encourage you to venture out into creating fresh salsas and sauces of your own from scratch. They are not only quick and easy to make, but tasty and nutritious, too. Below is a recipe to get you started.



Chef Amalia in the kitchen

CHIRMOL Charred Tomato and Mint Salsa



- 1 tablespoon finely chopped mint
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped cilantro (optional)
- 2 teaspoons freshly squeezed lime juice
- 1/2 teaspoon minced bird’s eye (Thai) chile (optional)
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt

1. Dry pan roast or grill the tomatoes until they are charred all over and soft (12 to 15 minutes). Chop them coarsely, but do not peel them.
2. Combine the tomatoes with the remaining ingredients. Taste and adjust seasonings, if needed.

Amalia’s Note: Use tomatillos instead of tomatoes—or use both—and follow the same steps.

By Amalia Moreno-Damgaard (AmaliaLLC.com)

Chirmol de Tomate is so simple, yet so delicious. *Chirmol* is to Guatemalans what *chimichurri* is to Argentines. *Chirmol* is always present with grilled meats. It is the delicious accompaniment to any Guatemalan *churrasco* (barbecue).

Makes about 2 1/4 cups

- 3 Roma tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons finely diced onion

Amalia’s Upcoming Events

Flavors of Latin America

Culture through Cuisine by the Minnesota International Center, featuring a menu from eight Latin countries, a cooking demonstration, and more fun.

Tuesday, August 19, 6-9pm, at Midtown Global Market.
Visit AmaliaLLC.com for more information.

COMMUNITY NEWS

JULY 2014

LATINO AMERICAN TODAY

9

New Projects Planned for the Metro Green Line Area Including House and Retail



Developers have announced at least \$2.5 billion worth of new construction and redevelopment projects within a half-mile of the METRO Green Line (Central Corridor LRT Project) since engineering work began more than five years ago.

The Green Line, which will begin service June 14, has been a draw for both residential and commercial development near the University of Minnesota, along University Avenue, and in both downtown St. Paul and Minneapolis.

“The development we’ve seen so far only marks the beginning of new opportunities in the Central Corridor,” said Sue Haigh, chair of the Metropolitan Council. “For decades to come, the Green Line will be a catalyst for employment and economic growth along its 11-mile route.”

The Metropolitan Council is tracking 121 projects that have announced total-investment figures, or have filed building permits, to reach the \$2.5 billion figure. Of those 121 projects, 43 haven’t yet announced or made public an investment figure, meaning that the \$2.5 billion figure is expected to climb in coming months.

The 121 new development projects identified along the corridor include buildings already constructed, projects underway and those in the planning phase. The Met Council’s calculations do not include some of the larger projects along the line that received public funding, including the new Vikings’ stadium, TCF Bank Stadium and Target Field. The total does include the \$243 million renovation of the Union Depot in St. Paul’s Lowertown, which is the Green Line’s eastern terminus.

The Green Line, which entered the preliminary engineering stage in December 2006, is expected to provide an estimated 41,000 average weekday boardings by 2030.

The line includes 18 new stations, plus five stations shared with the Blue Line in downtown Minneapolis. The project’s total budget of \$957 million was funded by a combination of federal, state and local sources.

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AEG LIVE

Hispanic Millennials Comfortable With English And Spanish Media

By Erik Sass

It's not news that Hispanic millennials born in the U.S. are more likely to consume English-language media than their foreign-born counterparts -- but what may be surprising is that U.S.-born Hispanic millennials also appear to consume Spanish-language media more than older Hispanics born in the U.S.

That's according to data from the Hispanic Millennial Project, a collaboration between Sensis and ThinkNow Research.

Among Hispanic millennials born in the U.S., 19% said they consume only English-language media, with another 22% consuming "mostly" English-language media, Sensis and ThinkNow found. Some 40% said they consume English- and Spanish-language media equally, 10% said they consume mostly Spanish-language media, and 9% said they consume only Spanish-language media. By comparison, among foreign-born Hispanic millennials, 31% said they consume "mostly" Spanish-language media, and just 7% said they consume only English-language media.

These findings are generally in line with the standard acculturation model, but interestingly, U.S.-born Hispanic millennials were also more likely to say they consume both English- and Spanish-language media than their older U.S.-born counterparts: among Hispanics ages 35-64 who were born in the U.S., 32% said they consume English- and Spanish-language media equally, compared to 40% for Hispanic millennials.

The difference could be the result of a number of factors, including a greater desire to embrace Hispanic identity among younger U.S.-born Hispanics and their parents (versus previous generations' desire to "blend in"), and growing availability of Spanish-language media over time.

Media companies and research outfits are grappling with the complexity of this rapidly growing market.

In May, Pulpo Media, a cross-platform digital media network targeting Hispanic audiences, unveiled a new acculturation model that combines online and offline data to create more targeted segments within the overall U.S. Hispanic market. The model combines data from the U.S. Census with proprietary first- and third-party data, including country of birth, parent's country of birth, age of immigration, number of years spent in the U.S., language preference at home and English proficiency, and analyzes the data to create segments that can be targeted down to the ZIP code level.



Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State Latina Voter Outreach Specialist Working to Encourage Voting in the Community

By Nathan Bowie

Maria de la Paz is one of six voter outreach specialists from the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State who are working this summer to encourage voter participation and engagement as part of the nonpartisan "Promote the Vote" initiative.

The goal of the outreach effort is to encourage voter participation during this significant election year: On November 4, Minnesota voters will head to the polls to decide a U.S. Senate seat, all of Minnesota's eight U.S. House seats, as well as governor and other state officers, and all Minnesota State House seats. There will be many important local and county elections on the ballot as well in 2014.

De la Paz will focus her efforts on Latino communities to educate eligible voters about the voting process and help with voter registration.

"I am so excited to connect with Latino communities to help educate people about the voting process and why it is important," says de la Paz. "Far too many eligible voters don't exercise their right to vote and our goal is to encourage people to get involved and participate in our democratic process."

Interested businesses, organizations, nonprofits, educational institutions and others can sign up to request "Promote the Vote" voter education workshops, voter registration drive support, as well as order promotional materials and more at no charge at mnvotes.org. Groups can connect directly with de la Paz via email, maria.lopez@state.mn.us, or call her at (651) 201-1362.

De la Paz and the Office of the Secretary of State will be at the Westside La Clinica (153 Cesar Chavez St. in St. Paul) and at the East Side Family Clinic (895 E. 7th St., St. Paul) on Wednesdays from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Mnvotes.org — A One-Stop-Shop for Voters

Eligible voters are encouraged to visit the Office of the Secretary of State's website mnvotes.org as a valuable voter resource. The site includes many helpful tools for voters to: check their voter registration status; register to vote; request an absentee ballot to vote early; find their polling place; view a sample ballot to learn about candidates and more.

Key 2014 Election Dates

Voters should be aware of these important dates:

- **June 27** — Absentee ballots will be available for the August 12 Primary Election. Absentee voting means voting before Election Day, not at the polling place. Voters can request absentee ballots online at mnvotes.org to vote early — all voters may vote early by absentee ballot.
- **July 22** — Pre-registration deadline for Primary Election. Voters are encouraged to pre-register to vote to avoid a wait at the polling place. Voters who miss this deadline may still register at their polling place on Primary Election Day, August 12. Voters must be registered to vote.
- **August 12** — Primary Election Day. This election will determine the candidates for the November 4 ballot.
- **September 19** — Absentee ballots will be available for the November 4 General Election.
- **October 14** — Pre-registration deadline for the General Election. Voters are encouraged to pre-register to vote to avoid a wait at the polling place. Voters who miss this deadline may still register at their polling place on Election Day, November 4. Voters must be registered to vote.
- **November 4** — General Election Day.



Maria de la Paz

Pro-Immigrant Republicans React to Texas Law Enforcement Surge

By *Café Con Leche Republicans*

Café Con Leche Republicans, a national pro-immigrant Republican organization with a Texas chapter, today reacted to the Texas law enforcement surge announced by Gov. Perry.

Bob Quasius, Café Con Leche Republicans President said, "We understand the need and support the law enforcement surge. Clearly our border patrol has its hands full in dealing with the humanitarian crisis resulting from the surge in unaccompanied minors from Central America."

Victor Medina, Texas Café Con Leche Republican leader added, "Texas has always risen to meet the challenges of human tragedy. Whether it was taking in refugees from New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, or helping the town of West pick up the pieces after a devastating explosion, we look out for our fellow man. Rather than relying on our government, we hope our fellow Texans will once again step up and follow the command of Christ to show compassion for the poor, the needy, and the strangers from other lands who are sick and imprisoned!"

Medina continued, "It's obvious there needs to be a surge in humanitarian assistance too. With 30-40 people in a cold room with one toilet and very little food it's obvious the humanitarian crisis must be addressed quickly. Allowing these conditions to persist with children is particularly disturbing, and is government-sponsored child abuse. The Border Patrol and ICE do not seem capable of dealing with large numbers of child refugees, and it's appropriate for Texas to surge resources in support of these children's special needs."

Quasius observed, "We're also concerned about messaging and tone. Instead of referring to a surge in 'illegal immigration,'" instead our elected Republican officials should refer to them as child refugees, as that's what they are. Hispanic voters are very empathetic to the plight of these children, and expect respectful tone. Constant rhetoric about how some might be gang members, etc. by some Republican politicians is not well received by Hispanic voters."



Bob Quasius, President of Café Con Leche Republicans



Ballet Folklorico Mexico Azteca

Minnesota Lynx Host Latino Night

Thousands of fans enjoyed Latino Night at the basketball game between the reigning champion, Minnesota Lynx, and the San Antonio Stars.

The half time show featured the dance group, Ballet Folklorico Mexico Azteca, who are from Minneapolis.



Vanessa Lopez and young Lynx fans enjoy the game and the half time show!

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