

**Defend The Honor Campaign
Campaña para Defender Nuestro Honor**

c/o Dr. Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez
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NEWS RELEASE

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**PBS REJECTS LATINO COMMUNITY'S DEMANDS FOR INCLUSION
PBS President Kerger Defends Ken Burns' Exclusion of Latinos from WWII Documentary**

In a March 13th letter to Latino community representatives, Paula Kerger, President and CEO of the Public Broadcasting System (PBS), rejected the demand that PBS delay the release of Ken Burns' 7-part WWII documentary, until it is re-edited to include the Latino experience. "This is unacceptable and an insult to the hundreds of thousands of Latino veterans who served in World War II," responded Professor Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez of the University of Texas at Austin and one of the leaders of the Defend the Honor Campaign that met with Kerger last week to discuss the issue.

The Ken Burns documentary, which is scheduled to air in late September, has been the target of mounting criticism in the Latino community because of its exclusion of the experience of Latinos. The 14-hour series was six years in the making.

"How is it possible, that in the six years it took to make this film, no one involved thought to ask where are the Latino stories?" asked Gus Chavez, another founder of the Defend the Honor Campaign.

In her reply to the group, Kerger noted that PBS is supporting community outreach and educational initiatives attached to the Burns documentary. That local programming is intended to "bring forth the many stories that are not part of the Ken Burns series." PBS will consider programs produced by local stations by possible national airing, she said.

But the local programming isn't enough, the Defend the Honor Campaign organizers said.

“Once again they want to relegate us to being the side attraction, keeping us out of the main act,” explained Marta Garcia, a New York-based founder of the Hispanic group.

Angelo Falcón, another founding member of the Defend The Honor Campaign, noted that the timing of the Burns documentary was particularly troublesome.

“Our demand for inclusion comes at a time when the Latino community is too often under attack as being ‘unwelcomed foreigners,’ despite the fact that the majority of us are U.S. citizens and, in the case of WWII, close to half a million of us served this country,” said Falcón.

Rivas-Rodriguez, who established the U.S. Latino & Latina WWII Oral History Project at the University of Texas at Austin eight years ago, said that the community response to news of the Burns documentary has been visceral.

“All Americans feel a deep, personal, connection to WWII,” she said. “These are our parents, our grandparents, aunts and uncles. We know their contributions and sacrifices. And we are painfully aware of how they have not had the recognition they deserve. It is our duty to right this wrong.”

Various Latino groups and individuals are calling for a boycott of PBS, while others plan to pressure the corporate, foundation and government sponsors of PBS and Ken Burns, said Chavez, a Defend the Honor Campaign organizer out of San Diego, CA.

“We are disappointed that PBS, being a public television network, was not more responsive to our community’s concerns,” said Chavez. “They have not heard the last from us.”

Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez is an associate professor of journalism at the University of Texas at Austin and director of the U.S. Latino & Latina WWII Oral History Project

(<http://utopia.utexas.edu/explore/latino/>)

Gus Chavez is a Latino community development and education advocate based in San Diego.

Marta Garcia is founder and co-chair of the New York Chapter of the National Hispanic Medical Coalition

Angelo Falcón is president and founder of the National Institute for Latino Policy, based in New York City

ATTACHMENTS:

A. TEXT OF LETTER FROM PAULA KERGER, PBS PRESIDENT AND CEO

B. TEXT OF REPLY BY THE DEFEND THE HONOR CAMPAIGN TO PAULA KERGER

A. TEXT OF LETTER
FROM PAULA KERGER, PBS PRESIDENT AND CEO

March 13, 2007

Mr. Gus Chavez
Mr. Angelo Falcón
Ms. Marta García
Dr. Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez
Mr. Ivan Román
c/o Dr. Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez
The University of Texas at Austin
School of Journalism
1 University Station A1000
Austin, TX 78712

Dear Mr. Chavez, Mr. Falcón, Ms. García, Dr. Rivas-Rodriguez and Mr. Román:

Thank you for coming to our offices last week to meet with my PBS colleagues and me. We appreciated the opportunity to listen and begin to build understanding between PBS and the organizations you represent. While our conversation focused on your specific concerns regarding the upcoming Ken Burns series, THE WAR, we hope this will be the start of a broader dialogue with organizations representing the Latino community to address the goal of increasing representation of Latinos among the ranks of public broadcasting's content creators, among the leadership and staff of our stations and national organizations, and in the programming we present.

As we indicated during our discussion last week, THE WAR was never intended to be a comprehensive or definitive television series on the subject of World War II. From the beginning of this project, co-producers Ken Burns and Lynn Novick understood that their film would not capture many important aspects of those cataclysmic years. Each episode opens with the statement, "The Second World War was fought in a million places, too many for any one accounting. This is the story of how four towns and their citizens experienced that war." As we discussed, THE WAR was completed in Fall 2006 and is scheduled for broadcast beginning September 23. While we acknowledge and respect the concerns you have raised, we do not agree that going back into production to revise a completed series that represents one filmmaker's vision is the appropriate solution.

It is our goal that THE WAR serve as a catalyst to bring forth the many stories that are not part of the Ken Burns series. That is why we are supporting one of the most comprehensive community outreach and educational initiatives in our history. The initiative includes grants to every public television station in every state that will allow communities across the country to produce programming, host events and invite public discourse in order to celebrate and commemorate the extraordinary sacrifices made by millions of Americans,

both on the field of combat and on the home front. PBS will consider programs produced by our member stations for national distribution.

More broadly, we recognize public broadcasting's responsibility to reflect the diversity of our nation's population in our programming and among the management, staff and independent producing community. Here are a few highlights of progress to date:

- V-me, a new, national Spanish-language television network that will bring a new kind of quality entertainment to Latino viewers, featuring the best of public television.
- Series such as INDEPENDENT LENS and P.O.V., which feature the work of independent Latino filmmakers.
- AMERICAN FAMILY, an Emmy-nominated program that was the first dramatic series on American broadcast television to focus on Latino characters.
- The continuing children's series MAYA AND MIGUEL and LOS NINOS EN SU CASA.
- CPB's National Minority Consortia, which is dedicated to funding quality, culturally diverse programming for the American public. Members of the consortia are the Latino Public Broadcasting (LPB), Native American Public Telecommunications (NAPT), the Center for Asian American Media (CAAM), the National Black Programming Consortium (NBPC) and the Pacific Islanders in Communications (PIC).
- CPB/PBS Producers Academy, which offers professional development activities designed to identify public broadcasting's next generation of creative talent. Each year, PBS works with the Minority Consortia and the National Association of Latino Independent Producers (NALIP) to encourage a diverse range of participants and applicants for the annual scholarships.
- The Diversity Task Force, created by PBS' Board of Directors in 2005, which is currently sponsoring the 2007-2008 Leadership Development Program. The goal of the initiative is to provide leadership and management development training that will lead to the creation of a new generation of public broadcasting leaders that reflects our multicultural society.
- The story of Latinos in this country is one of critical importance and while PBS has been at the forefront of providing a forum for these voices to be heard, there is more that needs to be done.

Our meeting with you, and PBS Chief Content Officer John Boland's discussion with the NALIP board of directors at their conference late last week, supports our conclusion that we must expand our commitment, particularly around the creation and delivery of content that better represents the diversity of the population we serve. The concerns you and other leaders have raised about the under-representation of Latinos both "behind and in front of

the camera” need to be addressed with meaningful actions that will have long-term positive impact.

To that end, today we are beginning work to organize a new initiative – tentatively titled American Mosaic – to develop and implement a plan that will over time change the face of public broadcasting to more accurately reflect the wonderful “mosaic” that is America in the 21st century. Working in coordination with the Minority Consortia and Diversity Task Force, we will organize a working group, with representatives from key media-related organizations representing minority communities, to take four steps: (1) evaluate the current status and identify targets of opportunity, (2) develop an action plan to bring about positive systemic change, (3) implement the plan and (4) monitor progress and report results. We are committed, through the American Mosaic initiative and other efforts, to effect substantial improvement in the representation of Latinos and other minorities among our producers, in our leadership and in our content.

We look forward to working with leaders in the Latino community as we undertake this endeavor.

Sincerely,
Paula Kerger
PBS President and CEO

B. TEXT OF REPLY BY THE DEFEND THE HONOR CAMPAIGN TO PAULA KERGER

March 13, 2007

Ms. Paula Kerger
PBS President and CEO
2100 Crystal Drive
Arlington, VA 22202-3785

Dear Ms. Kerger,

We are extremely disappointed with your March 13th response to our requests that PBS delay release of the documentary, *The War*, until it is re-edited to include the experience of Latino veterans. We attempted to convey to you and your staff how strongly the Latino community feels about this issue, and how it feels that our WWII generation has been treated with a great lack of respect. The five of us met you at PBS headquarters on March 6, in good faith, in the expectation that you would take our concerns seriously. You did not.

Your stance that your hands are tied on this matter is unacceptable. Public Broadcasting System, supported by taxpayers, as well as many of our private donations, has a duty to

correct this exclusion of Latinos from Ken Burn's film. Failure to make any attempt do so is a slap in the face to Latino veterans and the Latino community as a whole.

The "diversity" initiatives that you outlined in your letter cannot substitute for your inaction on the matter of the Burn's WWII documentary. Each initiative to be more representative of the country's population is long overdue. None are a response to the problem of the Latino exclusion from this documentary.

As we explained when we met with you, your offer to compensate for this discriminatory exclusion of Latinos by offering to include Latinos in local programming that will support the Burns' documentary simply tells our community that PBS continues to see Latino participation as a side show -- and not the main attraction. This is a further marginalization of Latino images in PBS programming. Our intent in meeting with you was to end this marginalization and not to endorse its continuation.

We regret that PBS has chosen to squander this opportunity to strengthen its relationship to Latinos and instead chose to further antagonize our community in this manner.

We regret that we could not work with you in a constructive manner to resolve this injustice perpetuated by your organization and Ken Burns.

Sincerely,

Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez
Gus Chavez
Marta Garcia
Angelo Falcón

cc: Lionel Sosa, Member, PBS Board of Directors