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ABSTRACT

Television and the mass media in general have created an unflattering stereotype of Mexican-Americans that is based on racism and generates racism. The most offensive of these is the "Frito-Bandito." In children's programing, very few shows present Mexican-American characters and the ones that are presented are stereotypes. Mexican-Americans are also absent in adult programs. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is urged to give La Raza personnel total control over programs directed toward that community. An alternate plan is to give new licenses for television broadcasting to the La Raza community in areas where the local stations refuse to grant such creative control. The present state of programing cannot continue. These programs deprive La Raza children of an equal opportunity to develop a healthy self identity, and they deprive the whole country from gaining a realistic, positive view of Mexican-Americans. (JK)



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STATEMENT MADE BY MANUEL LAREZ OF LULAC, BEFORE THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION IN WASHINGTON D.C. ON JAN. 10, 1973.

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For many years, radio, and ^{TV} film were viewed mainly as entertainment devices. It has become increasingly clear, however, that the media plays a much more significant role in our lives. Radio serves as the main promotional funnel for the entire recording industry. "Hollywood" has helped to shape people's concepts and values all over the world. Television has become the number one informational and entertainment unit in this country. It provides us with a host of services, including regular news coverage, and fictional escapism. The TV set has also become one of the most popular babysitters and child pacifiers of the century. The media's power is awesome. But how is it used, and to what purpose?

Let us narrow the question down to the topic of children's Television. Even further, let us examine it in the light of what it means to Latino/Chicano children in this society. If we are to consider seriously television programming for La Raza children, then we must recognize that television and the mass media in general has created an unflattering stereotype of La Raza that is based upon racism, and generates racism.

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As Dr. Martinez explains:

Exaggerated Mexican racial and cultural characteristics, together with some outright misconceptions concerning their way of life, symbolically suggest to the audience that such people are comical, lazy and thieving, who want what the Anglos can have by virtue of their superior taste and culture.

Immediate measures must be taken to dissolve this devisive stereotype. Interestingly enough, however, the stereotype did not develop out of children's fare, but out of adult fare advertisements. If the Federal Communications Commission acts honorably upon their public mandate to make the airwaves more socially meaningful and less harmful, then the commissioners should enact a rule that outlaws the airing of offensive racist stereotypes. The most offensive of these stereotypes, the "Frito-Bandito", is still being aired in many states, despite the passionate and reasoned pleas from responsible Raza who argue that it is harmful to the self esteem of our children.

Let us not kid ourselves, bi-lingual television programming for children is not going to erase the stereotypes from the minds of the children's parents. We need to develop more bi-lingual television programming across the board. Children do



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not watch children's shows exclusively, nor do adults watch children's programs regularly. We need to clean up the adult fare for the children's sake. Let us see more Raza at prime time when the entire family is watching, and let us see them doing important parts, such as news reporting, making commentary, and playing leading roles in drama and entertainment.

Now that the FCC and others are concerned about bi-lingual television programming, we should consider that meaningful programming would mean that La Raza personnel and the community have total control over the content of the shows. We are sick and tired of having the Anglo-white media establishment exercise control over our Raza artists and professionals on the air. Without naming specific instances which would divert us from the central issue at hand, I know and you know that the television industry has tended to create by in-house censure a supercilious view of the realities of our existence as human beings on this tiny planet.

If the FCC is unwilling to force the television stations to grant full creative control to La Raza for La Raza programming, then I would request that new licenses for television broadcasting



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be made available to the La Raza community in areas where the local stations refuse to grant such creative control.

Concerning the present state of affairs in children's programming, the cartoon is a central interest to children. Yet, the shameful fact is that La Raza children are discriminated against in cartoons. In San Francisco, for example, our research discovered that cartoons offered on one commercial station on a typical Saturday morning includes no La Raza children playing and having a good time in the cartoons, and the only reference to La Raza was in a negative, ridiculing fashion. This is a brutal way to treat our children.

How the F.C.C. can just sit back and let this kind of programming go on is beyond comprehension, however, it is typical of the way in which Spanish sur-named have been treated by the T.V. industry. It is very clear how the F.C.C. has not listened to what the invisible minority has been saying and even today we are saying stop and listen. Better still, stop and do something about the programming, you have distorted the image of the Mexican-American for too long now. It is time to assess what you are doing to our people. We don't want your reassurance



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that you will look into the matter, we have heard that from the local stations for years now.

Consider the fact that in the Bay Area there are over 600,000 Spanish sur-named people and that a large percentage are children. In the Los Angeles area, alone, there are one million Spanish sur-named, not to mention New Mexico, Texas, Colorado and Arizona. The Midwest also has a substantial population of Spanish sur-named, yet very little or no programming is directed at the Spanish speaking children.

I often hear Anglo society say "Let them join the mainstream of America;" yet, through the media, you exclude the Spanish sur-name from American Culture.

As long as I have known, this country has been the melting pot, yet when we turn the T.V. on the only thing one sees is white and black. Local and network stations do not direct their programs at Spanish sur-named children. I know it is difficult for you to understand the problem Spanish sur-named face with the media. But as responsible men you must understand that it is your moral duty to the people of this country to show that you



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are men of vision and understanding. Let's not wait until hell freezes over before we begin to understand and deal with the problem. Let's not continue to distort and misrepresent the Mexican American as has been done and is still being done.

Stated in its most dramatic terms, today's cartoon fare represents a "psychological war of genocide" perpetrated against La Raza. Stated in more modest terms, the bulk of the cartoons seen over television deny and distort positive, realistic information to all children about La Raza children and adults, which has a cumulative detrimental psychological effect upon La Raza children. As a consequence, La Raza children are not given an equal opportunity to develop a healthy self identity. The FCC has, in sum, permitted television to practice racism in children's programming to the detriment of La Raza children.

The recommendations to the commission from S.F. LULAC Chapter are as follows:

- 1) That positive role models for La Raza children be included as part of children's programming on the local as well as on the national level cartoons included.
- 2) That you act on the the petition that has been filed against Channels 5, 7 and 2 in San Francisco.



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- 3) That you enforce the regulation governing all media.
4) That you accept the recommendation of committee on childrens
T.V.