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The campaign against hate speech

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Alex Nogales is president and chief executive of the National Hispanic Media Coalition, a Pasadena-based group advocating for better representation of Latinos in television and radio. (Photo courtesy of the National Hispanic Media Coalition)

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February 16, 2012 | 1:38 p.m.

Alex Nogales is president and chief executive of the Pasadena-based National Hispanic Media Coalition. The nonprofit, founded in 1986, has advocated against hate speech in the media and has pushed media companies to hire talent reflective of their audiences. He answered questions from the

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Pasadena Sun via email.

Sun: Was there a particular moment that moved you to work to change the broadcast media's image of Latinos and the hiring of Latino talent?

Nogales: Growing up, as my family picked the fruits and vegetables in season, we spotted signs up and down the state that read, "No Mexicans or Dogs Allowed." I was conscious then, at a very young age, that Mexicans were looked upon as the "other," not as good, nor as capable, as white Americans. This played out in practical terms with the lack of opportunities in education and employment available to Latinos. As a producer at [CBS](#), I saw firsthand who got the jobs and promotions; and it had little to do with qualifications or experience, but everything to do with cultural affinity and similarities of background and education. It was inevitable that I should, at a certain point, say this is not fair and something has to be done about it.

Q: How much have things changed?

A: Things got better in the 1980s and '90s, and then came the economic downturn. All of a sudden we had radio and television [talk show](#) hosts blaming the Latino community for everything wrong in America. Hate speech against Latinos continues to flourish and hate crimes against Latinos have increased as a result.

Q: Your organization has asked the Federal Communications Commission not to grant licenses to media outlets whose practices you find unacceptable. What have been the results?

A: The FCC rarely denies license renewal applications. However, NHMC's advocacy has had major impacts. For instance, one challenge that we filed several years back led to the largest FCC fine ever — [Univision](#) had to pay \$24 million for its failure to air appropriate children's programming. At the same time, we are friends with a lot of broadcasters. Many of them are doing a great job at serving the Latino community. Like in any friendship, when one friend is acting badly, it is the other friend's job to nudge him in the right direction. Many times NHMC does just this, without resorting to challenging licenses.

Q: Which of the organization's campaigns has been most significant?

A: The campaign to combat hate speech in media is one of the most significant campaigns that NHMC has led. Our national strategy seeks to find approaches that minimize the hateful rhetoric promoted by some media outlets. NHMC believes that there is a relationship between the increase of hate speech in media and the increase of anti-Latino hate crimes documented by the [FBI](#) in recent years.

The campaign goals are to have the Federal Communications Commission and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration investigate hate speech in media and its impact on local communities.... So far, the FCC and the NTIA have ignored our requests. Hence, we are now shifting our focus to a public campaign.

We commissioned the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center to work on three studies related to hate speech and the impact that it has on behavior.

Early this year, we released a report, "American Hate Radio," that details the hate speech of [several] pundits.... We will use this report to bolster a discussion with the industry about eliminating all hate speech from its airwaves.

Q: What are the benefits of being based in Pasadena?

A: My staff and I love Pasadena. It is quiet, has a great deal of culture, wonderful restaurants and cultural events abound. Also, the city has become very diverse and the ring of different languages,



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music and dance is exciting and galvanizing. Our offices at the Western Justice Center are beautiful, and because of the beautiful and serene surroundings, NHMC gets a lot of work done.

Pasadena is around one-third Latino, and it is a community in dire need of social and educational services. Fortunately, there a number of excellent organizations that provide services in these areas, and NHMC has convened and helped organize these organizations into a coalition to better serve the Latino community.

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