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Possible Rise in Anti-Hispanic Hate Crimes a Concern

By Yasmin Rincon

LOS ANGELES – The president of the National Hispanic Media Coalition sounded the alarm about the social consequences of attempts to deny U.S. citizenship to children of undocumented immigrants.

"The words of our elected representatives are often charged with hate and feelings of xenophobia, especially against Hispanics, which is putting this area of public opinion completely out of touch with reality," Alex Nogales told Efe.

"They blame us for things like unemployment, lack of security and economic problems," the NHMC president said in an interview.

"A lot of very serious studies exist that recount the valuable contributions that immigrants make to the economy, figures that clearly show the benefits of Hispanic labor, Latino businessmen and immigrants who join the army – they give so much to this country – but that information is hidden, ignored or distorted, and recently we have been demonized," he said.

For Nogales, this particular moment is especially worrying because actions are being orchestrated on different fronts to marginalize the undocumented.

He cited the push to modify the 14th Amendment of the Constitution, and the upcoming enactment in six states of anti-immigrant measures inspired by Arizona's SB1070, which seeks to criminalize undocumented immigrants.

"The latest study of hate crimes shows they increased by 40-percent between 2003 and 2007," Nogales said. "These figures are now even higher, and if we don't ease off on these anti-immigrant diatribes, the number of hate crimes will continue to rise."

During his 10 years as leader of the NHMC, the organization has presented more than 50 pleas asking the Federal Communications Commission to revoke the broadcasting licenses of radio and television outlets seen as engaging in hate speech.

Arguing in favor of greater diversity in the news, the NHMC is currently working with A.C. Nielsen Research Company to tackle the inadequate programming devoted to Latino subjects, while continuing to fight for greater diversity at ABC, CBS, FOX and NBC.

The NHMC has also engaged the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center to carry out four projects related to hate crimes, two of which have already been completed.

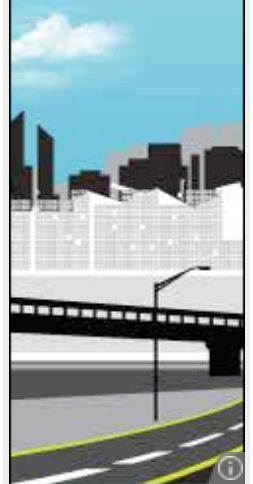
"The first determines the language that is used in hate speech, how to describe it, how to define this language, what words are used. The second study establishes the relationship between news anchors and reporters on different radio stations and TV channels, and the guests they have on their programs," Nogales said.

"In the course of the research, it became evident that some friends of these news anchors are members of racist organizations that present themselves as an organization out to protect the rule-of-law image of the United States, but their real



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motivation is basically xenophobic. It's a group led by John Tanton and his American anti-immigrant movement," he said.

Tanton, a Michigan ophthalmologist, founded the Federation for American Immigration Reform, or FAIR, a source frequently cited by anti-immigration firebrands such as former CNN host Lou Dobbs.

"Our fear is that all these restrictive laws against Latino immigrants are adding fuel to the fire of hate speech, which can only lead to more hate crimes," Nogales told Efe.

"How can it be that so many Latinos are dying as a consequence of the attacks and violence against them. For us, all American society contributes to this because no action is being taken to stop such activities," he said. EFE



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