



PRESS RELEASE

Invisible No More: Disparities in Latino Representation & Inclusion in Nation's Preeminent Art & Cultural Institution, Smithsonian Institution

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LOS ANGELES, CA—In collaboration with researchers and data scientists, the UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Initiative (LPPI) will launch the first ever analysis to evaluate the Smithsonian Institution's progress in implementing the ten recommendations from its 1994 report on the significant underrepresentation of Latinos in the Smithsonian workforce, programming, and collections. This project will apply rigorous research methods to assess not only employment equity but also how the nation's preeminent art and cultural institution reflects and represents Latinos as part of U.S. cultural heritage.

The Smithsonian's 1994 report *Willful Neglect: The Smithsonian Institution and U.S. Latinos* found that Latinos comprised only 2.7 percent of the workforce, with no Latinos in senior management or executive leadership. Since 1994, the Latino population has doubled to 17.6 percent of the U.S. population (or over 56 million people), making Latinos the largest minority group. Latinos have made indelible contributions to the political, social, economic, and cultural fabric of this country from the Southwest to the Northeast, yet such facts are not widely included in U.S. museum exhibitions, permanent collections, and textbooks.

"This evaluation comes at a time when Latinos are under attack and misrepresented in policy debates impacting this population," said LPPI Executive Director Sonja Diaz. "It is incumbent upon our nation's preeminent public cultural institution—which presents itself as 'the world's largest [museum](#), [education](#), and [research](#) complex'—to lead the way in fully integrating Latinos into the telling of the American story."

Between 1994 and 2018, Latinos have increased from 2.7 percent to 9.9 percent of the Smithsonian workforce. But given the dramatic increase in the Latino population during that time, significant underrepresentation continues. "The Smithsonian has made important progress in remedying Latino exclusion, notably with the creation of the Latino Center in 1997 and a number of strategic hires in the curatorial ranks over the last decade, but there remains more work to be done to ensure equity," said Dr. Chon Noriega, Director of the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, which is a partner in this project. "The goal here is to take stock of this progress, put it in the context of the U.S. and Latino population today, and identify areas for further improvement."

The Smithsonian has no Latino-facing museum, yet garners millions of unique online visits to the Latino Center website and the Latino virtual museum. "The struggle for representation is not new; yet the benefits brought by the Latino population remain clear. U.S. Latinos generate a GDP that makes it the 7th largest economy in the world. That's large enough to be a member of the G7. As the youngest demographic group and the largest share of school-age children, Latinos are a critical audience for the saliency of the Smithsonian's operations and future. When Latinos are integrated in

decision-making structures, the future of this country is better equipped to lead,” states Dr. Matt Barreto, Co-Founder of LPPI and Professor of Chicana/o Studies and Political Science.

Leveraging the immense research expertise at UCLA, LPPI is well-positioned to catalyze evidence-based, non-partisan analysis to address the historical omission of Latinos from the Smithsonian. These findings will be presented during Hispanic Heritage Month 2018 and shared with Congress and the White House.