

## **NALIP HOLDS PBS ACCOUNTABLE**

Dear Defenders of the Honor,

The National Association of Latino Independent Producers (NALIP) has been promoting the advancement, development and funding of Latino/Latina film and media arts for ten years now. Today, they sent a civil, but firm, letter to PBS CEO Paula Kerger and the head of diversity for PBS, Haydee Rodriguez, scoffing at PBS's Diversity Initiative on Content. DTH will forward that report to you as it becomes available. But we wanted to share this NALIP letter with you, in which NALIP basically say: PBS, you can't be serious! Kudos to NALIP for insisting that PBS take this issue seriously.

Here is the letter below, which was on NALIP letterhead, which included its hard-working board of directors, board of trustees and executive staff. You might want to visit [www.nalip.org](http://www.nalip.org) to see more about this impressive organization.

March 4, 2009

Ms. Paula Kerger, Chief Executive Officer  
Ms. Haydee M. Rodriguez, Director, Diversity Initiative  
Public Broadcasting Service  
2100 Crystal Drive  
Arlington, VA 22202-3785

Dear Ms. Kerger and Ms. Rodriguez:

We would like to thank you for the PBS Diversity Initiative on Content (November, 2008). As you know, NALIP strongly supports and encourages PBS in its efforts to accurately reflect the diversity of American life in its programming and staffing.

While we applaud the effort to generate an assessment of the system's diversity practices, we are concerned by the report's statement that PBS "cannot paint the full picture of its 'diverse' content or the diversity of its staff."

**NALIP recognizes the unique character of public television as both a non-profit and a decentralized agency. However, we believe it continues to be the responsibility of PBS to provide accurate and verifiable diversity data from its member stations. In particular, we are concerned by the lack of data regarding staffing and content themes from the National Programming Services' signature series such as Frontline, NOVA, Nature, American Experience and American Masters. Data for the prime-time strands, and the major producing stations responsible for their production, should have been included in the report.**

**Our organization is concerned that after an internal effort on the part of PBS, this data continues to be unavailable. NALIP is also concerned that the report provides incomplete and often anecdotal information regarding diversity. A case in point is the report's inclusion of the "Aztec Massacre" episode in the Secrets of the Dead series as an example of Latino programming. Though this episode**

may have been a unique component of the series, we do not feel it is an example of public television addressing the concerns of the U.S. Latino community. Furthermore, according to the information about that episode's hiring practices, "production also uses some local crew on location." A diversity report befitting public television can and should do better.

NALIP is happy to celebrate PBS's many successes, including the continued support of successful, on-camera journalists such as Ray Suarez and Maria Hinojosa, the excellent job that children's programming (both in broadcast and online) is doing to address issues of diversity, and the ongoing and consistent efforts of series like Independent Lens and P.O.V. to incorporate diverse programming. Similarly, we commend American Experience's recent efforts to incorporate Latino programming and to work with Latino producers. We hope that this is part of a sustained effort to incorporate Latino themes and to work with Latino producers for future programs.

**At this stage, we would like to reiterate our request, first made in 2005, for employment data (including number of writers, directors and producers hired) from the prime-time strands and the major producing stations for, at minimum, the past 9 years.** We are eager to discuss a timeline

for receiving this data, so that together we can form a baseline from which to identify trouble areas and record improvements. In addition, NALIP would like to see Latino representation at the executive level on one or more of the prime-time strands, as well as on the National Program Service's editorial board. We believe that these steps will help PBS diversify and to grow the audiences of the future.

We are very pleased that you will be addressing NALIP producers at our tenth annual conference in Newport Beach next month. We would also like to extend an invitation for you to have a conversation with our Board of Directors, which will be in session on Friday, April 17th from 10:30 am - 12:30 pm, prior to the NALIP 10 Conference opening lunch. We gladly welcome the opportunity to hear your thoughts, as well as to brainstorm strategies for the future.

We thank you in advance for reviewing our requests, and look forward to our continued partnership with PBS.

Sincerely,  
Diversity Committee,  
The National Association of Latino Independent Producers

Cc: Congresswoman Nydia M. Velazquez, Chair, Congressional Hispanic Caucus  
Angela Palmer, CPB  
Orlando Bagwell, Ford Foundation

Gus Chavez & Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, Co-Founders, Defend the Honor  
Defend the Honor

