



MALDEF

Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund

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Via U.S. Mail and Electronic Mail

April 9, 2007

Paula Kerger
President & Chief Executive Officer
Public Broadcasting System
2100 Crystal Drive
Arlington, VA 22202-3785

**National Headquarters
Los Angeles
Regional Office**
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Los Angeles, CA 90014
Tel: 213.629.2512
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Dear Ms. Kerger:

**Atlanta
Regional Office**
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The Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), the nation's leading non-profit Latino legal organization dedicated to litigation, advocacy, community education and leadership development, is truly disappointed that a prestigious filmmaker such as Ken Burns and the educationally-based PBS ignored the more than 750,000 Latinos who served in World War II.

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Regardless of the reason for the omission of Latinos in Mr. Burns' documentary, the perpetuation of the myth that Latinos do not contribute to this great country would only be fueled by airing a documentary that excludes reference to their contributions. Books have been written about the contributions of Latinos; one that comes to mind is a book William Luna, a local military historian, wrote for the Department of Defense about the contributions of Latinos. It documents the contributions of the most decorated group during World War II—Latinos.

**Washington, D.C.
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In Illinois, many Latinos have paid the ultimate price. In tiny Silvis, Illinois, there is a street called "*Hero Street*." It is so named because on this one block eight Mexican American men gave their lives on behalf of their country during World War II. Those men are all medal of honor winners and "*Hero Street*" may be the most decorated block in the United States of America. A total of 22 families living on that block sent 84 loved ones to WWII, Korea and Viet Nam.

**Houston
Program Office**
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It is with this backdrop that MALDEF believes the production of a documentary that does not even mention the contributions of Latinos in WWII is offensive and shameful, especially in light of the fact that "educational materials" have been developed with this project. Allowing the Ken Burns documentary to run "as is" will further distort history.

**Sacramento
Satellite Office**
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This gross error must be corrected prior to the airing or distribution of Mr. Burns' documentary, regardless of the additional cost or time incurred. Failure to include contributions of Latinos would be yet another example of how history has ignored contributions made by real Americans.

Sincerely,

Ricardo Meza
Regional Counsel

cc: <http://www.defendthehonor.org/>

*Celebrating Our 37th Anniversary
Protecting and Promoting Latino Civil Rights
www.maldef.org*