

New York Times - Too Many Latinos on Primetime TV? By Robert Rose

A **New York Times** *Arts and Entertainment Blog* recently featured a bit of coverage on our **Help! Change TV** (HCTV) street team campaign at the television network upfronts.

The writer received a flyer while attending the ABC Upfront and she assumed the campaign was simply protesting the cancellation of *The George Lopez Show*. It looked like she didn't bother to visit the web site, or if she did, only on a cursory, surface level.

Had the writer taken the time to go to the site and properly research the issue, she would have seen that Help! Change TV's specific purpose at the upfront was not simply as protesting the cancellation of one show on English language TV.

HCTV attacks the root and cause of the cancellation, which of course, is money and which is directly tied to ratings and **Nielsen Media Research's** role in the under-representation and

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stereotyping of Latinos on English TV (due to their under sampling of young, U.S. born Latinos or those most likely to watch "The George Lopez Show").

George Lopez spoke out pretty strongly against the circumstances surrounding the cancellation of his show. I agree with him on many points.

The show was moved several times and was repeatedly up against the *American Idol* juggernaut. Just as it was headed to syndication, ABC pulled the plug on one of the first shows featuring a mostly Latino cast and crew (since they didn't produce the show, they don't get the lucrative dollars that the production studio will from syndication).

Puzzling that no one seems to be mentioning the outrageousness of the recent low ratings of The George Lopez Show, which Nielsen, defying all logic, reported attracts more African American viewers than Hispanic viewers? Preposterous!

If Nielsen were correctly counting U.S. born Latino viewers (those most likely to watch Latino shows in English according to mounds of research), who knows what the George Lopez Show's ratings would be?

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Would it be enough to beat American Idol in head to head competition? Probably not. Enough to save the show for another season? Possibly.

But the point is "who knows"? Since Nielsen Media Research does not track nativity, they can not tell you how many U.S. born Latinos are watching anything (ah, but they can tell you how many Latinos of Peruvian or Bolivian heritage are watching).

The New York Times reaction came across like so many in today's corporate media world; simplistic, a bit lazy and elitist (some might argue a bit like Nielsen Media Research). The writer pointed to the one remaining successful Latino show on network TV (*Ugly Betty*, also on ABC) and hinted that George Lopez is jealous or "disappointed" at this success. The blog suggested that since Latinos have Spanish language TV, one Latin show on English language, prime-time network TV is fine; as if two or three would simply be too many (despite that fact that in many major markets like Los Angeles, young Latinos are 50% of key demographics).

The writer further suggested that Latinos clamored for Spanish language TV and got it because there "was gold in them there barrios", clearly ignorant of the fact that Spanish TV has been around for well over 30 years and appeals almost exclusively to immigrant Latinos (and just 17 million or so of the nation's 42 million documented U.S. Latinos).

The writer doesn't acknowledge (or know) the fact that U.S. born Latinos make up over 60% of all U.S. Latinos and represent a market that is 25 million strong making up a much larger

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percentage of the network and advertiser coveted youth demographics (persons aged 18-34 and persons 12-34). This information and more is on the www.HelpChangeTV.com site.

The writer does refer back to the couple or three recent failures by the English language networks to woo Hispanic audiences, suggesting, I suppose that since the networks tried and failed once, they shouldn't try it again.

Never mind the fact that approximately 80% of all new TV series fail. Are Latin themed shows on English TV somehow supposed to be held to a higher standard of success? The suggestion is that if the networks are generous enough to try a Latin themed show and are not blessed with an immediate, surefire hit (as in the case of "Ugly Betty"), then there is no need to try again for another five or six seasons.

Latinos have "**Sabado Gigante**" (Big Saturday) or wall to wall nightly novellas and soccer on Spanish language TV! What else can they possibly want?

The writer for the Times needs to spend a weekend with **AIM Events**, promoting our shows. If we could coax her into

Barrio

or

East LA

she'd witness a very different picture.

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She'd see many Latinos (not all of them U.S. born by the way) fed up with the limited choices on Spanish TV's imported (and inexpensive) programming that they eagerly sign the [Help! Change TV petition](#)

. She'd also see fatigue with the tired, old gardener-maid-drug dealer-prostitute stereotypes and the persistent lack of representation on English language TV.

When we announced the Help! Change TV initiative to pressure Nielsen to change their ratings methodology last fall, I received an urgent call from the New York Times business section, very excited about writing about the effort on this issue. This writer requested an urgent interview with me so he could meet a quick deadline. I dropped everything I was doing to accommodate their deadline.

The following week, when the story never ran, I called the writer back to ask what happened. He was kind enough to return my message but sheepishly admitted the article didn't run because Nielsen Media Research never called him back to give their side of the story.

How many times have you read a news story where one side of the issue never calls back by deadline and you see the story run anyway? Read your paper today (if you still get your news from the paper); see how many stories fit that description.

After reading the unfortunate New York Times blog after the upfront, I can't help but wonder if the old "Nielsen didn't respond by my deadline" excuse really holds water.

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I think it just might be another case of an elitist, out of touch newspaper not understanding the very issues they purport to write about or the REAL world around them. The NY Times blog writer said that Help! Change TV was "confusing" yet the *Toronto Globe and Mail* wrote a wonderful piece about it (as did scores of other publications in the U.S.). More recently a student run, neighborhood newspaper "The Bronx Journal" did an excellent job of telling the Help! Change TV story (and they got a call back from Nielsen for comment within one day). The message was not "confusing" to them.

So let me get this straight: One New York Times writer was "confused" and yet another New York Times writer couldn't get a call back from Nielsen for comment? However college students in the Bronx easily grasped the issue and wrote about it and were able to get a call back from Nielsen with a day?

I wonder if the New York Times writers would be happy with just a single network show that didn't make fun of or misrepresent them in some way. If all TV network shows but that one presented New York Times writers as intellectually lazy, out of touch, media elites. Do you think then they might understand and empathize a little more with U.S. born Latinos?

Then again, maybe that wouldn't be such an inaccurate stereotype after all.

Link to the NY Times blog below:

<http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/05/15/39/>

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Link to the Bronx News Journal Story Below:

http://aimtvgroup.com/hctv/press/TBJMayEdition2007ENG_11.pdf

www.HelpChangeTV.com

Robert Rose is CEO of **AIM Tell-A-Vision Group** (a division of Artist and Idea Management, Ltd.) and American Latino TV, LLC and founder of Help! Change TV as well as Executive Producer of *American Latino TV* and *LatiNation* (www.AIMTVGroup.com). The opinions expressed are those of the author alone, and not of the companies with which he is affiliated.

BLOG LINK: <http://aimtvgroup.com/blog2/>