

# LATINOS BEYOND REEL

## Challenging a Media Stereotype

[Abridged English Transcript]

### **TITLE SCREEN:**

Latinos Beyond Reel:  
Challenging a Media Stereotype

### **News Montage:**

- *New Census figures show Hispanics accounted for more than half of the nation's population growth in the last decade.*
- *The Hispanic population crossed the fifty million mark in 2010, and people of Hispanic origin now clearly represent the second largest group in the country – with 16% of the total U.S. population.*
- *Every so often the Census Bureau gives Americans a look in the mirror to see exactly who we are and how we're changing. And a report from the Bureau today says 1 out of 6 adults is now Hispanic, as is 1 out of 4 children.*

### **Chyng Sun:**

How about you, Jonah? Are you Latino?

### **Jonah:**

I think I am Latino because my mom was born somewhere where they speak Spanish.

### **Charlie:**

I am Latino because my heritage is Puerto Rican.

### **Sydney:**

I am Latino because of how my family celebrates and of what music we listen to when we dance.

### **Chyng Sun:**

How about you, Zach? Are you Latino?

### **Zach:**

I think I am Latino because my grandparents came from South America.

### **Sebastian:**

My mother is from Puerto Rico, and my father is from Mexico. I was born in the U.S.

### **NARRATOR:**

The terms “Latino” or “Hispanic” commonly refer to people in the U.S. who were born in, or whose ancestors came from, Latin America, which includes Mexico, Central and South America, and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean – over 20 countries in all.

**ANGHARAD VALDIVIA:**

If you look at the history of colonization and population flows into Latin America, it's a very complex history that includes every ethnic group in the world.

**MOCTESUMA ESPARZA:**

We have a national identity as American Latinos that is far more powerful than our individual identities of where our grandparents or great-grandparents may have come from.

**TEXT ON SCREEN:**

We Are America.

**NARRATOR:**

But despite the diverse and fundamentally American character of the Latino experience, and the growing power of Latino citizens as a political, economic, and cultural force, the mainstream American media have told a very different story about Latinos.

**Chyng Sun:**

Do you remember seeing any films or TV shows or cartoons where Latinos or Hispanics are heroes?

**Niko:**

I kind of remember Speedy Gonzalez.

**Charlie:**

I don't remember any characters.

**Sydney:**

I don't remember any good or bad Hispanic characters in a movie or film.

**Emalee:**

No.

**Chyng Sun:**

How about you, Zach?

**Zach:**

None at all.

**NARRATOR:**

Since the earliest days of television and film, a few Latino stars have managed to break through the ethnic barrier. In recent years, there has been an increase in Latino representations in the mainstream media. We also see Latino produced films and television programs that portray these communities with dignity and complexity. But studies have continued to show that Latinos are grossly underrepresented and misrepresented in entertainment and news programming, both in front of and behind the camera.

**JUSTIFYING HISTORY****CHARLES RAMIREZ BERG:**

Latinos in American cinema goes all the way back to the silent days, at the very beginning – so we are talking a hundred years ago, early 1900's. In California, you have the influx of filmmakers who are coming from all around the country, and they arrive in California, and they don't really necessarily know much about Mexico or Mexicans or Mexican-Americans or the history or the experience.

**NARRATOR:**

Some of the most enduring Latino stereotypes from early Hollywood movies are the lazy Mexican, the Latin lover, and the subservient working-class man and woman. But among all of these stereotypes, the most pervasive and damaging has been the violent Latino criminal.

**CHARLES RAMIREZ BERG:**

So you get movies with titles like "Broncho Billy and the Greaser." And the Greaser was the term used disparagingly against Mexicans and Mexican-America.

**MOCTESUMA ESPARZA:**

The birth of Hollywood is mixed up with a great deal of racist imagery. There were many movies that were made where the Mexicans were bandits. I remember seeing this slobbering, despicable drunk, who was supposed to be Pancho Villa, played by Wallace Beery. I remember my father telling me that that was a complete lie – a distortion of the reality. That Pancho Villa didn't even drink; that he was an immaculate military dressed general who was an intelligent, strategic figure; and who had an ideology and a purpose. And that this depiction that I saw in Hollywood, with Wallace Beery having played that role, was poison; that it was poisoning my mind – distorting the image of what it was to be a Mexicano.

**NARRATOR:**

The image of Mexican revolutionary men and women fighting for political, social, and economic emancipation and justice was later stripped of its dignity and nobility.

Hollywood exploited the image of these heroes and transformed them into the “bandido” stereotype.

**Film Clip [“The Treasure of the Sierra Madre”]:**

- *Ola Señor, we are “Federales.” You know, the mountain police.*
- *If you are the police, where are your badges?*
- *Badges? We ain't got not badges. We don't need no badges. I don't have to show you any stinking badges!*

**ALEX NOGALES:**

"Show you my badge? I don't have to show you my stinking badge!" But he said it with such an accent, and he looked so ugly. He was a Mexican bandit. I was kind of ashamed of that guy. Jesus Christ, look at this guy, you know?

**Film Clip [“The Treasure of the Sierra Madre”]:**

- *You go on your way without my gun and go quick!*

**ANGHARAD VALDIVIA:**

My first stereotype that I encountered, or that I remember, was the Frito Bandito.

**Commercial Clip [“Frito Bandito”]:**

- *I am the Frito Bandito. I just find out the Frito Bureau Investigation looks for me. They say I am a bad man – that I steal many bags of Fritos Corn Chips and eat them all myself. Oh, it hurts me to hear these things because it's not true.*

**ANGHARAD VALDIVIA:**

It wasn't the first time that I had encountered this, even though I had just gotten to the country, because I remember in Chile I encountered Mexicans as bandits in popular culture too.

**Film Clip [“Pancho’s Hideaway”]:**

- *It's Pancho Vanilla!*

**ANGHARAD VALDIVIA:**

There was very little filmic production in Chile at the time, so most of the movies that I was watching did come from the United States.

**CHARLES RAMIREZ BERG:**

The narrative function of a stereotype like “El Bandido” is to provide a conflict for the Anglo hero that will show the Anglo hero's prowess and power and superiority.

**Film Clip [“The Professionals”]:**

- *What do you got in those bags, boss? Gold?*
- *You got more gold in your teeth!*

- *Hey boss, it's very dangerous around here.*
- *Is that so?*
- *Sure, many bandidos hide in these mountains, very bad hombres. They steal from anybody - especially gringos.*
- *Well, in that case we better keep moving.*
- *Go with god.*

**CHARLES RAMIREZ BERG:**

Another function of stereotypes is to justify history. It's to look back at history and retell that history in a way that's more palatable.

**Film Clip ["Red River"]:**

- *This is it. This is where we start growing good beef.*
- *Everything a man could want. Good water and grass. Plenty of it.*
- *Who does this belong to?*
- *To me! Someday that'll all be covered with good beef.*

**CHARLES RAMIREZ BERG:**

When you look at the settling of the west and the expansion of the west, which required displacing Native Americans and taking over land that was owned by Mexico, a film like "Red River," there is a scene in which the John Wayne character is looking for land because he wants to establish a ranch and finds this land in southern Texas. A representative of the owner of the land, who is Mexican, comes and tells him it's not his land, and John Wayne says he is going to claim the land.

**Film Clip ["Red River"]:**

- *This land is Don Diego's.*
- *Tell him that all the land north of that river's mine. Tell him to stay off of it.*
- *Oh, but the land is his.*
- *Where did he get it?*
- *Oh, many years ago by Grand and Patton, inscribed by the king of all the Spain.*

**CHARLES RAMIREZ BERG:**

He provokes the Mexican into drawing first.

**Film Clip ["Red River"]:**

- *Get away, man.*
- *I'm sorry for you, sir!*

**CHARLES RAMIREZ BERG:**

It's a way of justifying the takeover of the land.

**NARRATOR:**

What is now the American Southwest was part of Mexico until the conclusion of the U.S.-Mexican War in 1848, when the territory was annexed by the United States as

part of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. This resulted in massive displacement and destruction of Mexican families and culture.

### **JUAN GONZALEZ:**

Who were the original “bandidos,” as far as the Anglo press was concerned? They were Tiburcio Vásquez in California. Juan Cortina, the Mexican bandit in South Texas who was fighting to keep the land that the Anglo settlers had taken from his family. They were Gregorio Cortez who shot an Anglo sheriff in a dispute in the early 1900s. These were all the bandits. What were they all doing? They were fighting to defend their land from the new settlers that had taken it from them. If you look at the early Latino press in the southwest, a major topic of Spanish language newspapers was the taking of the land of the original Mexican inhabitants by the new Anglos who were coming to the territories, a subject that is virtually absent from news coverage of the Anglo press. It was left to the journalist and the media creators of that era to justify that conquest and to create an image of the Mexicans as people who really were somehow less than civilized or not up to the level of maintaining such rich and bountiful land and keeping it. That's the reason why these images have persisted for so long. They're deeply rooted in the actual construction of the country, and to question the images is to question the history of how the country got to be where it is.

### **STEREOTYPES NEVER DIE?**

#### **MARI CASTANEDA:**

Today the image of the “bandido” riding around on horseback has disappeared. But what we see instead is a transformation of the bandido into other kind of stereotypes.

#### **NARRATOR:**

Over time, the portrayal of Mexican bandits has evolved into images of Latin American dictators and drug lords. But the most common ones to populate the American screen are those of violent urban criminals, drug dealers, and “gangbangers.”

#### **ADRIAN MARTINEZ:**

When I was starting out, I did an “America's Most Wanted,” and I was the drug dealer that they were trying to catch. I showed up on set, and the guy handed me a machine gun, and it was like a real machine gun, and he says, “Okay, I just want you to sit in the passenger side of this car and hold onto this bar that we put here. He is going to be driving about 45-50 miles an hour, and just put the weapon outside the window and shoot all 100 rounds. Okay, roll! Roll camera!”

#### **Film Clip [“Chase”]:**

- *Get out of the car!*
- *Don't even think about it!*
- *Pablo Cordova, you're under arrest!*

- *Nice and easy...*

**YANCEY ARIAS:**

A lot of times, I'll get scripts sent to me that are similar in tone.

**Film Clip ["Kingpin"]:**

- *Remember Mexico's style, my little brother? Orale!*

**YANCEY ARIAS:**

Some sort of a drug dealer. Some sort of a seedy guy who you know somehow is involved in the bad aspects of whatever the film is about.

**Film Clip:**

- [Scenes from "Hotel California"]

**LUIS ANTONIO RAMOS:**

I remember it was a role of a man who had been running from the police, and he also was a pedophile.

**Television Clip ["Burn Notice"]:**

- *Just like cops have drug-detecting dogs, some neighborhoods have cop-detecting kids. Once the alarm goes out, criminal activity shuts down like a picnic when it rains. And any fugitives run like jackrabbits.*

**LUIS ANTONIO RAMOS:**

When I saw it, it disturbed me. I was in a position where I needed the work. I needed the work at that time, and I had to do it. It broke my heart, and I was glad my mother wasn't alive to see it. That's how I felt about it.

**YANCEY ARIAS:**

There was definitely a role where it was just unforgiving, and it was a TV show. On the page, it was "bad guy."

**Television Clip ["Medium"]:**

- *Yes, that's her. That's my cousin.*

**YANCEY ARIAS:**

There I go on set, and the very first word comes in, and the director says, "Hey, how you doing? So you're the bad guy." And I look at him, "Well, you know what? I'm going to surprise you. I'm not quite going at this as the bad guy." "No, no, no, no," the director says. "You're the bad guy. No way around that."

**Television Clip ["Medium"]:**

- [Shooting] *Isabel! I know you're here.*

**YANCEY ARIAS:**

And I'm like, "Okay, I am not going to play this as the bad guy. I am going to go in this as a human being who's in desperate dire need."

**Television Clip ["Medium"]:**

- *Primo, what are you doing here?*
- *What am I doing here? You know exactly what I'm doing here.*

**YANCEY ARIAS:**

And I gave heart to this guy. They had a lot of different cuts, things that I brought to the table that wasn't quite on the script. After I finished it, and I watched it on the show, they cut all that out.

**Television Clip ["Medium"]:**

- *I want that baby!*
- *I'm sorry, Alberto. He's not here.*

**YANCEY ARIAS:**

And they just kept it all the mean stuff that I had to do looking like this maniacal kidnapping killer. And that was my first lesson. "If it ain't on the page, it ain't on the stage." Starve if you have to, but you have to live with that, and that will be forever in somebody's TV, and I have to know that that's out there. I tried to bring something different, and somebody in power said, "No, he can't come out looking heroic. We got to make him the bad guy."

**Film Clip ["Falling Down"]:**

- *What you call that?*
- *Graffiti?*
- *No, man. That's not fucking graffiti. That's a sign.*
- *He can't read it, man.*
- *I'll read it for you.*
- *It says this is fucking private property. No fucking trespassing. This means fucking you.*

**NARRATOR:**

While Latino men have been presented as hyper-violent and barbaric, Hollywood has consistently portrayed Latinas as hypersexual and emotionally volatile.

**Film Clip ["Chasing Papi"]:**

- *Surprise, Papi!*

**JOSEFINA LOPEZ:**



Most of the time, when we see Latinas, we see male fantasies in an exoticized, eroticized Latina. This whole hot señorita thing has always been around since the beginning of time.

**NARRATOR:**

Since the early days of Hollywood, in an unbroken chain of narrow stereotypes, Latinas have been portrayed as sexually promiscuous, as prostitutes, and as spitfires.

**Media Montage:**

- *I can't believe you did this to me in front of the whole church! You damn crazy gringo! In front of everybody!*
- *You try speaking in another language! Everybody out of my house!*

**ISABEL MOLINA-GUZMAN:**

Sofia Vergara, in the show "Modern Family," is the fast talking spitfire: curvaceous, highly feminine, highly sexual.

**Television Clip ["Modern Family"]:**

- *I love watching you stir.*
- *Then I will stop.*
- *What? Are you still mad at me?*

**ISABEL MOLINA-GUZMAN:**

We see the predominance of these stereotypes continue.

**LISA VIDAL:**

I did a movie called "I Like It Like That." In the film, I played this sort of around-the-block kind of girl – real 'loosey goosey,' sleeping with all the guys, bleached blonde hair, little midriff tops. When I came out of that movie, all of a sudden, those were all my auditions – was the around-the-block girl. So when I would walk in the room, and my hair was not bleached blonde, and I didn't have my little 'pasty things' in there so my boobs were this big like I did in the movie, they were like, "Who are you?"

**Film Clip ["I Like It Like That"]:**

- *You see this ring? You know what that makes me? His wife. You know what that makes you? His ho!*

**LISA VIDAL:**

I called my agent first, and I had told her. I said I don't want you to send me out for anymore prostitute roles or maid roles. I am not doing them anymore. If I don't work then I guess I won't work, but I don't want to do it anymore. She happened to call me up, and she was like, "I just have one more, just one more and this, I swear, this will be it." It was to play a prostitute in a film called "Night and the City." "It is Robert De Niro. It's you and Robert De Niro on the screen." I was like, "Well, maybe I will make an exception for that one!"

**Film Clip ["Night and the City"]:**

- *What you got in there, sweet stuff?*
- *Carmen, I'm serious. I'm tired of bailing you out.*
- *You, Mother Theresa, hit it. Do as I tell you!*
- *Don't you touch me!*
- *Hit it! Get out!*
- *Stay off the streets!*
- *Maricon!*

**LISA VIDAL:**

That was the last prostitute role I played, with Robert De Niro, so I went out well!

**JOSEFINA LOPEZ:**

I think what is so insulting about stereotypes is that you rob people of their humanity. You only present one dimension.

**Film Clip ["Meet the Fockers"]:**

- *Hey!*
- *Hi baby!*
- *Good to see you.*
- *I haven't seen you in years!*
- *I know.*
- *Those aren't for you.*

**ANGHARAD VALDIVIA:**

One of the major stereotypes about Latinas is the Latina maid, often trying to sleep with the man of the house.

**Television Clip ["Californication"]:**

- *When we're done, can you at least let me mop up?*
- *Oh my god...*

**ANGHARAD VALDIVIA:**

Lupe Ontiveros estimates that she had played the maid character 187 times.

**Film Montage:**

- *This is Rosalita. Rosalita's going to help us with the packing just until my arm is better.*
- *Even though you're poor, don't you have any hobbies or interests or anything?*
- *Where do they teach you to talk like this? In some Panama City "Sailor wanna hump-hump bar"? Or is this getaway day and your last shot at his whiskey? Sell crazy someplace else. We're all stocked up here.*

**ANGHARAD VALDIVIA:**

There's a lack of dignity to the character.

**MARI CASTANEDA:**

The problem with that kind of representation is that it doesn't give the women, I think, the respect that they deserve for the kind of work that they're doing. Many women are working as housekeepers.

**Television Clip ["Will & Grace"]:**

- *Karen has decided that from now on, she's going to treat you, my wild Latin rose, like a decent human being.*

- *Is that true?*

- *Yeah, honey.*

- *Then I quit!*

- *What?*

**Film Clip ["Crash"]:**

- *Sorry I take your car, miss Jean. I turn key to my car but nothing.*

- *You know Maria? Just once I would like to wake up and find these dishes in the cabinet, okay?*

- *Si, señora. No problem.*

**NARRATOR:**

While these popular stereotypes cast Latino women and men in somewhat different roles, they share one thing in common. They all position Latinos as foreign, as “other,” and even as inferior.

**Film Clip ["The Kids Are All Right"]:**

- *You know, I'm going to pay you through the end of the day, and then we're through, okay?*

- *Señora!*

- *Thanks very much. Thanks! Thank you!*

**ISABEL MOLINA-GUZMAN:**

Accent becomes one of the key ways to mark people as “other,” as not like most Americans. And that accent can be a Spanish accent or they can be urban accents.

**Television Clip ["The George Lopez Show"]:**

- *It's okay! I could talk. I know, huh! I know, huh! I know, huh!*

**ISABEL MOLINA-GUZMAN:**

Accents in the U.S. are, what I believe, a racialized marker. And that racialized marker not only tells them that you're different but that you're less than, that you are somehow less intelligent or not equal to somebody who doesn't have an accent.

**Film Clip [“Wild Wild West”]:**

- *Nice try, buster!*
- *Please, I realize I look like something out of James Fenimore Cooper, but I assure you I mean you no harm.*
- *I'm Rita, and I was hired here as an entertainer.*

**ISABEL MOLINA-GUZMAN:**

Salma Hayek talks about the very same thing. She talks about the bikini girl stereotype that she was often forced to play in movies like “Wild Wild West.”

**Film Clip [“Wild Wild West”]:**

- *Well, goodnight and thank you for saving me.*
- *Goodnight, ma'am.*
- *Rita, that outfit is most becoming on you.*

**ISABEL MOLINA-GUZMAN:**

She argues people responded to her accent and basically said: “Oh, she only has a kind of limited range of roles she can perform – the Latina maid or the sexy Latina.”

**Television Clip [“Inside the Actors Studio”]:**

- *Hi Salma, I'm Kara Webster, first year actor. I was wondering if you've ever found having an accent to be a hindrance as an actress? If you've ever lost roles?*
- *Are you kidding me? You were wondering? Every time it was a part for a woman that had any kind of education or was smart or any kind of social responsibility, like a good job, "She's Mexican. Nobody's gonna believe it!"*

**ISABEL MOLINA-GUZMAN:**

We see Jennifer Lopez, who has been able to get rid of her New York accent, and who is able to kind of transform herself physically to be very ethnically and racially ambiguous. Over the past 10 years in particular, the most marketable Latinas and Latinos tend to be the ones with lighter skin, tend to be the ones that appear more white, or whiter, or can pass for white. Somebody like Eva Mendez or Jessica Alba or even Cameron Diaz, who most people don't think of as Latina, have a much more broader set of roles because of not only their ethnic and racial ambiguity but the way they speak English does not mark them with very negative constructions.

**Film Clip [“Hitch”]:**

- *See if these are in focus, will you? And have them at my desk in an hour.*

**ANGHARAD VALDIVIA:**

That is a very useful kind of representation in the mainstream. It can speak to Latinos, but it can also be kind of white. It's a very economical way for the mainstream to appeal to different segments of the audience without alienating what it still considers to

be its main target audience, which is the white audience. Somebody like Michelle Rodriguez, on the other hand, who is a little bit more afro-Latina, gets cast in very different roles.

**Film Montage [Michelle Rodriguez]:**

- *I'm not the only one with a gun, bitch.*
- *What the fuck! That's my brother, you little shit.*
- *I got this.*
- *You bet your ass, papa. Let's make some money!*

**ANGHARAD VALDIVIA:**

She gets cast as the criminal, the outsider, the macho chick.

**Film Clip ["Resident Evil"]:**

- *You shot her five times. How was she still standing?*
- *The bitch isn't standing now.*

**ANGHARAD VALDIVIA:**

So you do see a quite a bit of colorism in that Afro-Latinas and darker Latinas do not get as many opportunities and as much circulation as the light Latinas, who can also be, perhaps, read as white.

**MIKE SARGENT:**

A lot of unconscious racism exists because these type of images, these type of perceptions, these type of attitudes have existed so long, they are the norm.

**Commercial Clip [Chiquita Banana]:**

- [Singing] *"I'm Chiquita Banana and I've come to say that you really shouldn't treat a fellow man this way. If you like to be refined and civilized, your eating habits really ought to be revised."*

**NARRATOR:**

Negative Latino stereotypes not only permeate films and television but are also prevalent in comic books and cartoons targeted at children. Even in animal forms, we see blatant caricatures of Latino women as hypersexual.

**Film Montage:**

- [Latino caricatures singing]

**NARRATOR:**

We see Latino men as lawbreakers. As we see, Mexico is regularly portrayed as a place of lawlessness and illicit pleasure.

**Television Montage:**

- *A stolen whale, heading to Tijuana!*
- *Tijuana!*
- *[Singing] South of the Border, down Mexico way...*

**NARRATOR:**

And none of these messages have been lost on children.

**Chyng Sun:**

This one you probably haven't seen. Have you ever seen "Speedy Gonzales"?

**Children:**

Yeah. This is the one I saw.

**Emalee:**

[Watching "Speedy Gonzales"] They sleep in there?

**Television Clip ["Speedy Gonzales"]:**

- *Hey, Manuel. Wake up, Manuel. Wake up!*
- *Why you wake me up, Jose?*
- *I'm hungry.*
- *Oh, si! I'm hungry too, Jose. What we gonna eat?*
- *Stupid, you mean how we gonna get it?*

**Chyng Sun:**

How would you describe those little mice?

**Charlie:**

I think that they're Hispanic because they have a Spanish accent.

**Jonah:**

They're poor mice because there is not that much money in mouse land.

**Television Clip ["Speedy Gonzales"]:**

- *[Singing] "La Cucaracha! La Cucaracha!"*

**Chyng Sun:**

How would you describe their behavior?

**Charlie:**

I would describe the mice to act a little drunk.

**Niko:**

I would describe the mice as funny, crazy, and always would like to have parties.

**Film Clip ["Rio"]:**

- *Aww, what an adorable monkey.*

**Chyng Sun:**

What were the monkeys doing in the film?

**Film Clip ["Rio"]:**

- *Hey, my watch!*

**Emalee:**

They were stealing the people's watches and moneys and rings.

**Charlie:**

I think the monkeys are Brazilian.

**Film Clip ["Rio"]:**

- *Hello boys, seems like you've had a busy day.*

- *What, this? This is just some stuff we found.*

**MIKE SARGENT:**

Cartoon images probably have a deeper effect on children than any of us really want to take responsibility for.

**Film Clip ["Hop"]:**

- *E.B., welcome to the Easter Factory.*

- *It's amazing, Dad!*

- *I'm glad you like it because someday this will all be yours.*

**Jonah:**

E.B. is the good guy.

**Zach:**

I think E.B. is the good guy.

**Film Clip ["Hop"]:**

- *E.B., this is my second in command, Carlos.*

**Sebastian:**

I think Carlos comes from a Spanish speaking country because he has an accent.

**Zach:**

He said, "What's up *jefe*?"

**Film Clip ["Hop"]:**

- Ah, Señor, how you doing, jefe?

**Sydney:**

Carlos is the bad guy.

**Niko:**

I think Carlos is a bad guy because he betrayed EB's father and wanted to rule Easter and not have it anymore.

**Film Clip ["Hop"]:**

- Carlos, think of the children.

- But I am! The children, they don't want candy and chocolate. From now on, their baskets will be filled with the world's finest worms.

**Chyng Sun:**

Who would like to play in a movie, if you have a chance? Can you raise your hand? Okay, three, four. Four people would like to be in a movie.

**Charlie:**

I would probably want to play a good guy once in a while because being a bad guy all the time would probably get boring for me.

**Sebastian:**

I would like to be the good guy because the good guys are always the role model of the movie, always like the moral end. It's always good to be the good guy, so... Good guy always wins in a movie.

**Chyng Sun:**

Would you like to play Carlos?

**Niko:**

I wouldn't want to play the role of Carlos because he is evil. He wants to steal the spot of the Easter Bunny.

**Jonah:**

I would pick the role that's not so bad because I don't really want to do that much bad things.

**Zack:**

If I were to be big bad, I will just do it for one movie, and that's it.

**Chyng Sun:**

How about you, Charlie? You like action films, right? Can you imagine Latinos are main characters of action films? Would you like to make a film like that?



**Charlie:**

I couldn't imagine a Latino person being a main character because a lot of the movies I watch, usually, all the main characters are American.

**IMAGES MATTER****Radio Clip [NPR, "All Things Considered"]:**

- From NPR News, this is "All Things Considered," I'm Melissa Block.  
 - And I'm Robert Siegel. When the film "Fort Apache: The Bronx" came out in 1981, it was a hit. Paul Newman played a conflicted cop in a neighborhood ravaged by poverty and drugs. Fort Apache was also controversial. Local community leaders fought with the producers and threatened to sue because of the way the film depicted blacks and Puerto Ricans.

**LILLIAN JIMENEZ:**

When "Fort Apache" was being made, that horrific film that Paul Newman and Ed Asner were in, many of us who were against it – because I was part of that committee against "Fort Apache" – many of us were saying, "look at the south Bronx on 3rd Avenue." Show the line of people waiting for the 55 bus. Those are the working people that are making New York run. You show those people because that's a part of our community. Our community is not these sociopaths.

**Film Clip ["Fort Apache"]:**

- *We're on the job.*  
 - *Yeah, I'm on my j-o-b too. Just like you.*  
 - *[Shoots gun]*

**LILLIAN JIMENEZ:**

We have real structural realities where people can't even get jobs because, you know, hello! They are brown. They are black. They didn't speak English. They spoke it with an accent. People did the best that they could. There is a social network in the communities of poverty that is incredibly strong. How else are we going to survive when there is nothing else for us? We survive because we have each other. I want to see films that show that.

**NARRATOR:**

Faced with the US media's long history of denying them a voice, for decades Latino community groups have been mobilizing to challenge mainstream media's narrow representations. But while these protests have raised awareness, they haven't stopped media corporations from disrespecting Latinos.

**Television Clip ["Seinfeld"]:**

- *Hey! There's a guy burning the Puerto Rican flag!*
- *Who? Who is burning the flag?*
- *Him?*

**MARI CASTANEDA:**

In Seinfeld, the inclusion of this burning of the Puerto Rican flag, it's an insult to the Puerto Rican community because the flag represents a sense of identity in relationship to the U.S. – the island with regards to the U.S. – and also feeling a sense of ownership.

**Television Clip ["Work It"]:**

- *Hey Shakira, tone down the booty shake a little, will you?*

**NARRATOR:**

As recently as 2012, the ABC sitcom “Work It” included jokes that outraged the Latino community.

**Television Clip ["Work It"]:**

- *I'm not sure you'd be up for everything this job requires.*
- *I'm Puerto Rican. I'll be great at selling drugs!*
- *Yeah, that's not what I mean.*

**Protesters at ABC Studios:**

[Chanting] We are not drug dealers!

**NARRATOR:**

The Latino community's reactions to depictions like these have been swift and strong. Those protests against unjust depictions of Latinos helped pressure the networks to issue apologies, cancel programs, or revise content.

**Front Desk Assistant:**

National Hispanic Media Coalition, this is Tatiana.

**ALEX NOGALES:**

The mission of the National Hispanic Media Coalition is to do away with negative stereotypes. To advocate for telecommunication policy that favors Latinos and other people of color and create opportunities for Latinos both in front and in back of camera. “George Lopez” was not an accident. “Ugly Betty” didn't just happen. It happened because of the pressure that we put, because of the numbers we showed, and said, "When are we going to be included? Look at your numbers."

**FEDERICO SUBERVI:**

In the history of Hollywood, the first film that had a Latina child playing a Latina hero was “Spy Kids” in the year 2000. That's almost a century after films were introduced to the American public.

### **CHARLES RAMIREZ BERG:**

Those kids could be any ethnicity, any nationality. Robert Rodriguez, who directed and wrote the film, decides to make the kids Mexican-American, and their last name is Cortez.

### **Film Clip ["Spy Kids"]:**

- *Your name?*
- *Carmen Cortez.*
- *Your full name?*
- *Carmen Elizabeth Juanita De Costa-Brava Cortez.*
- *My name's a passcode?*

### **NARRATOR:**

Creative decisions like these also make business sense. By the year 2000, Latinos had become the largest minority in the United States. In order to capture the growing Latino market, mainstream media began producing movies and primetime television shows that featured Latino actors and characters more prominently.

### **Television Montage:**

- *Come on, vamonos! Let's get home fast. Whoa, this wind is getting strong!*
- *It's Maya and Miguel, what they will do next you never can tell. It's Maya and Miguel, brother and sister and best friends as well.*
- *I will put in a graft and a plate for stabilization. But before any of that can happen, we need to move your neck back into place.*

### **NARRATOR:**

At the same time, shows directed and produced by distinguished Latino filmmakers have not only depicted Latino characters and communities with nuance and complexity but have also created opportunities for Latinos both in front of and behind the camera.

### **CHON NORIEGA:**

A lot of the creative work that is being done, that really takes the Latino population into account, is being done by independent producers that are outside of that framework, who don't have access to the distribution channels that will ensure that that becomes a story that more and more people hear – about how we all make sense as part of the same society.

### **JOSEFINA LOPEZ:**

When I was a little girl, and I was just starting to write, I'd write about white girls. And my sister asked me, "Why are you writing about white girls?" Well, because that's all I see on television. It wasn't until I had a writing teacher who said you should write

about your life, and it was like, "Oh, but my life is not important." Because I was undocumented. I was poor. I was overweight. She said, "No, you have to write about what you know." And so I started to write about what I knew, and it was incredible because I got to be the protagonist.

**Film Clip ["Real Women Have Curves"]:**

- *We make them for 18. They sell them for 600. Does this seem right to you, Estela?*

**JOSEFINA LOPEZ:**

I wrote "Real Woman Have Curves" because I wanted to present real Latinas on screen – Latinas as they are: full-figured with curves, complex human beings.

**NARRATOR:**

But despite these signs of progress, negative Latino stereotypes continue to permeate the U.S. media landscape. Even in some of the most acclaimed shows about Latinos, myths surrounding them continue to circulate.

**ISABEL MOLINA-GUZMAN:**

One of the most, I think, problematic stories that "Ugly Betty" did had to do with the fact that she got into a special editors training, highly competitive program.

**Television Clip ["Ugly Betty"]:**

- *Here at YETI, we see people as more than just assistants. We see you as the future leaders of the publishing industry.*

- *This is exactly the opportunity that I've been looking for.*

**ISABEL MOLINA-GUZMAN:**

And then, later discovered that the only reason, presumably, that she got into this program was because she was a Latina.

**Television Clip ["Ugly Betty"]:**

- *You helped them meet their quota.*

- *What are you talking about?*

- *I mean they picked you because you're Latina. You're the token ethnic girl.*

- *If being Mexican helped this time, then good. Take it.*

- *No, Papi. I wanted to be accepted because I earned it.*

**ISABEL MOLINA-GUZMAN:**

It seemed to be de-emphasizing the fact that there is discrimination in the work place, and that Latinos don't advance in the work place because they don't have access to those kinds of opportunities.

**Television Clip ["The George Lopez Show"]:**

- *What was it about me that interested you in the first place?*

- *You're Latino!*
- *So you don't care if I can do the job?*
- *I'm sure you can do the job! That's not the point. The point is we need Lopez.*
- *So any Lopez would do.*

**NARRATOR:**

Popular shows Like “Ugly Betty” and “The George Lopez Show” have made Affirmative Action, a program meant to redress institutional discrimination, seem arbitrary and unfair.

**Television Clip ["The George Lopez Show"]:**

- *And you want to know the best thing? We can't be fired. Check this out.*
- *CEO! Hey, you better stop shredding the paper and start shredding that big ass, cracker!*

**NARRATOR:**

But even as these shows have promoted the idea that we live in a colorblind society, there have been clear signs that Latino stereotypes continue to shape perceptions in the real world – even at the highest levels.

**News Montage:**

- *This is an NBC News special report.*
- *NBC News has learned that President Obama has tapped federal appeals court judge Sonya Sotomayor as his first nominee to the U.S. Supreme Court.*
- *A 'wise Latina' is going to be on the Supreme Court? Another barrier is broken!*
- *She had an affirmative action appointment for heaven sakes.*
- *Because a brown woman...*
- *I think I'm going to send Sotomayor and her club a bunch of vacuum cleaners to help them clean up after their meetings.*
- *It's not nearly as textured and rich as it could be if I had led the life of a Latino woman!*

**NARRATOR:**

The biased coverage of Justice Sotomayor suggests that while the growth in Latino population and power has no doubt led to more positive representations of Latinos, it may also have triggered a full-scale backlash against them. And nowhere is this phenomenon more clear than in its relation to issues of immigration. News coverage tells far more stories about drugs or crimes associated with border crossings than it does about Latinos who are law-abiding citizens.

**CHON NORIEGA:**

The mass media, in some ways, reproduces. I don't think it's even necessarily a conscious agenda per se. It's just that by not challenging some of the frameworks within which they work, they reproduce these mindsets that leave certain things that are nonsensical unquestioned.

**News Montage:**

- *Mexico is colonizing the United States.*
- *For every illegal immigrant family in this country, we're giving them the equivalent of a brand new Mustang convertible every year.*
- *The children's job is to dumb down the American children and over-populate our schools.*
- *If I wanted to live in a third world country, I could move to one. I don't have to bring third world customs to America.*

**CHON NORIEGA:**

Only a portion of Latino population in the U.S. are immigrants. Only a portion of that immigrant population are here undocumented. But it becomes a coded way of talking about all Latinos.

**ALEX NOGALES:**

All of a sudden, we were to blame for crime. We were to blame for the economy. We were to blame for everything that was wrong with education. We were to blame for everything.

**Montage:**

- *We are tired of the illegals and the other minority immigrants ruining our country.*
- *What are you doing? You're supporting murderers! What's wrong with you? The same people protecting you, they kill!*
- *[Chanting] Si se puede! Si se puede!*
- *[Sign] Take your flu back to Mexico.*
- *Go back to Mexico, you fucking cowards!*
- *This is our country and our sovereignty. This has nothing to do with you now. It has something to do with losing our country, and we don't want to do that. And you people are destroying it.*

**NARRATOR:**

These anti-Latino attitudes have coarsened American political culture and led to extreme policies that have jeopardized civil rights.

**News Montage:**

- *Arizona is on the verge of enacting the country's toughest anti-immigration law.*
- *The legislation will make it a state crime to be in the U.S. illegally. Police will also be able to ask anyone to prove their legal status and demand to see a driver's license or state ID whenever the officer felt reasonable suspicion exists.*
- *The Supreme Court today ruled unanimously to uphold the most significant part of Arizona's strict immigration law. The "check your papers provision."*
- *What's clear about today's decision is that it has essentially opened the floodgates. It is an invitation to racial profiling.*
- *If you are in Arizona, and you speak with a little bit of an accent or your skin color's brown, you better have your papers with you.*

**OTTO SANTA ANA:**

What we see is that there is so much more invective, more anger, more articulated hatred spoken by people that's acceptable as public discourse.

**Commercial Montage:**

- *Charlie Melancon. Thanks to him, we might as well put out a welcome sign for illegal aliens!*
- *Waves of illegal aliens streaming across our border, joining violent gangs, forcing families to live in fear.*
- *Mothers killed, children executed. The tactics of vicious Central American gangs now on U.S. soil.*
- *Pushing drugs. Raping kids. Destroying lives. Thanks to gutless politicians who refuse to defend our borders.*

**Audio Clip [Virgil Peck, Kansas State Representative]:**

- *Looks like to me if shooting these immigrating barrel of hogs works, maybe we have found a problem to our illegal immigration problem.*

**OTTO SANTA ANA:**

No, I cannot say that this language determines the actions of someone who will hurt and kill someone. But the correlation of the environment of hatred that is articulated and constructed in language leads to settings which are more likely to be violent.

**ALEX NOGALES:**

The images on film and television – media as a whole – matter, and they matter because they shape the perceptions of a population within the borders of the entire community of that country. So how we are perceived is always going to be the way that we are treated.

**News Montage:**

- *Illegal aliens are in the country, including many murderers and rapists.*
- *Ninety-five percent of all outstanding homicide warrants are for illegal aliens.*
- *There's been a forty percent increase in hate crimes against the Hispanic population in the past five years.*
- *It was an unusually warm night when police say a group of teenagers set out to go "beaner jumping."*
- *Three eastern Pennsylvania teenagers will stand trial for the fatal beating of a Mexican immigrant.*
- *Anaheim police firing rubber bullets confront a crowd of terrified children and parents and angry residents. One officer unleashes a snarling police dog, which attacks a mother holding her child.*
- *He just released the dog, and I had my baby!*

- *This is a game called "Border Patrol." If you just watch for a bit, you'll understand how to play. You can try to kill the Mexicans the whole time. Just watch.*
- *Show me your green card.*
- *Are we supposed to kill these Mexicans or put them in jail? I don't know. Just kill them anyway. Hold him down, and then stab him through the heart.*
- *I'm gonna pop and cap me some beaners.*
- *Fuck you, Mexicans! You illegal aliens! Someday we'll kill 'em.*
- *I killed lots of beaners. White power! White power!*

**Niko:**

If I walked to a friend's house and they were playing this game, I would say, why are you playing this? It's mean and rude. If they are Spanish or Latino, and they see that they're getting killed in a game, it's going to be offensive to them.

**Chyng Sun:**

How about you, Sebastian? When you saw it, what did you think?

**Sebastian:**

I didn't know whether it was a game or not. I just knew that these kids were being racist against Mexicans, and it offended me, personally.

**Sydney:**

This game bothers me because it has Latino people being killed. And since I'm Latino, that doesn't really make me feel good.

**Chyng Sun:**

If it's other kind of people being killed, would you feel the same? Being bothered the same way? Or not?

**Niko:**

If the game had to do with killing other people, I would still feel the same because it's still wrong to kill people.

**TEXT ON SCREEN:**

There is one simple objective to this game. Keep them out... at any cost! Mexican Nationalist. Drug Smuggler. Breeder. Play.

**ALEX RIVERA:**

Who creates those images? What story is being told? How are they being presented? Through whose eyes? Those are crucial life and death questions because it has to do with the construction of reality. All stories can transform the way we see the world. It can be done for violence, but it can also be done for justice.

[End]