

**The Revolution May Not Be Televised....
But It Will Be On Radio**

The Latino, Native American and African American Public Radio Consortia recently declared themselves the New Nation Media Group. This powerful partnership will deepen and enrich the color and texture of the national conversation in public radio about every thing and many things – government, foreign policy, the economy, religion, family, race relations.

In the next five years public radio should reflect, not a revolution, but merely demonstrate that it has kept pace with the evolution of America.

Look around you – at your neighbors, at the people in the grocery store, at those washing your car, at fellow bargain hunters in the mall, at those lined up to vote. Look at the new residents of the White House. Everywhere you turn you see color either in its primary form or blended to create amazing new shades and skin tones.

The cultures and foods of the United States are hamburgers with green chile; tacos accompanied by Starbucks; coveted New Mexico piñón sold in baggies at the flea market have become pine nuts in gourmet kitchens; the burritos of migrant workers are wraps in the lunch of Wall Street stockbrokers. Dulce de leche rules the thirty-one flavors of ice cream and Jose is the preferred baby name in California. Halloween and Día de los Muertos, Christmas and Los Tres Reyes, Mother's Day on the third Sunday of May or Día de las Madres on May 10. Salsa on Dancing with the Stars and beating out ketchup as the top selling condiment of the United States. Yards of colorful fabric in folclórico skirts conceal tight capris and stiletto heels. The norteño cowboy hat and boots of Chihuahua set aside in favor of baseball caps and tennis shoes.

Listen to the languages and accents of the citizens and residents of this country. You hear English, all the major languages of the world and even some obsolete ones sprinkled into each other, moving in and out of one another and creating nuances, new words and a distinctive vocabulary and vernacular for the United States. Hasta la vista, baby.

The music is a hybrid of rhythm, tempo and lyrics. The gritos of rancheras blend into electrónica; La Bamba, originally a son jarocho from Veracruz, Mexico, is now a rock standard in the American songbook. The national debate is punctuated by the heavy bass lines of the African, Native American and Taiko drums, the congas of the Caribbean, the keyboard of the Chicano garage band. It blares out of open apartment windows, emanates from speakers in restaurants and coffee bars, and shakes your world from the car next to you at the stop sign.

Unless you're tuned to public radio. Then you'll get a subdued, thoughtful treatment devoid of passion or color on, insert topic here, its historical evolution and contemporary manifestations. You'll get analysis, deconstruction, and an academic treatise. Occasionally you'll hear the words and viewpoints of people of color or the snorts and hysteria of the Car Talk guys. But they are insufficient in number to be a true reflection of the mélange of voices, faces and perspectives that are heard outside the radio studios, among the millions of multicolored, multilingual, multifaceted residents of the United States, rippling through the crowd of African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, Asians and young people of all colors on the fields of Grant Park the night of the President-elect's victory speech.

Radio prides itself on its ability to move quickly, its agility, and versatility. Unlike its more ponderous public television brethren, radio should rapidly become a robust medium that incorporates a multi-layered, multi-lingual nation of people of all colors and mirrors it back to an audience hungry to hear the national conversation in voices with accents, geographic inflections, and passion.

In five years or less, people of all colors will be just as commonplace in public radio as they are on the streets, workplaces and neighborhoods of the United States. They will influence the programming, answer the phones, author the policies that govern the stations, solicit membership dollars and philanthropic funding and strengthen the public radio system just as they have become the backbone of America. Youth of color will ford the generational gap in the streams of public radio bringing innovation and technology that revitalize and enrich the relevance of public media to their lives.

The programming and the face of public service media, just like the face of the United States, will have changed to look more like the world around it. Program hosts, content, presentation and marketing

will embrace the cultural milieu that makes sushi all the rage, the chocolate and corn of ancient Mexico staples of the American diet, peach cobbler as American as apple pie and acupuncture and tai chi part of the nation's health and wellness practices.

We live in a nation of people with a vast color palette - brown, white, black, red, yellow, mocha, café au lait, jarro de barro, and more. We are a nation whose media should be just as colorful as our society. We are a nation that demands that radio broadcasts the evolution of America--a revolution indeed! Viva la evolucion!

***By Florence Hernandez-Ramos, Project Director
Latino Public Radio Consortium
P.O. Box 8862
Denver, CO 80201
lprc@comcast.net***