

Guest Column

**Submitted by Robert C. “Chip” Harrod
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Working Title:

Hispanic Heritage Month the focus of BRIDGES media work

BRIDGES for a Just Community has historically focused on supporting groups that are being “attacked” or misrepresented by encouraging complete representation of a group’s contributions and working with the media to help educate and increase awareness of the many attributes of our community’s diverse groups. Over the past 15 years or so, BRIDGES has worked with local media – electronic, print, mass and niche - to highlight the impact they have and continue to have on the image of Asian-Americans, Gays, Jews, African-Americans, Muslims and others.

BRIDGES also has a history with radio dating back to the early ‘90s. Prompted by instances of “hate” talk over local airwaves, we teamed up with Xavier University to sponsor some ground-breaking research into the social impact of talk radio. Our research showed that listeners of talk radio admitted the influence of talk radio hosts in forming their social and political views, contrary to the dismissive claim that, “we’re just entertainers, no one takes us seriously.”

Now our emerging Hispanic community needs our attention and support from local media. BRIDGES, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the Cincinnati League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and other Hispanic leaders will continue to further increase community engagement during this year’s 3rd annual Hispanic Heritage Month, which runs from September 15 to October 15, 2009 (Mexican Independence Day to Columbus Day).

Public service announcements produced by Local 12, WKRC-TV featuring prominent local Hispanics will air on local television and radio stations. Local events and programs, including Cincinnati’s 16th Annual Hispanic Festival on Sept. 12-13; an after-work Fountain Square Hispanic Celebration kick-off on Sept. 15, sponsored by Macy’s and Fifth Third Bank; Reds Hispanic Heritage Day at Great American Ball Park on Sept. 19; and the Hispanic Heritage Month closing event on Fountain Square on Oct. 15. For a complete calendar of activities, visit www.cincinnatiHMM.com.

BRIDGES is taking this opportunity to recognize the contributions made by Hispanics in our community and encourages others to appreciate the added value of cultural diversity and economic development associated with the growth of our local Hispanic population. At the same time, the *BRIDGES Progress Report on Human Relations in Greater Cincinnati* helps us track inclusion and fair treatment of this emerging group – the most recent survey shows race relations as a top priority in the Hispanic community.

Local Hispanics say race or police relations is the top issue facing the region – 24 percent of Hispanics compared to only 7 percent of African Americans and 5 percent of Whites name race or the police as the most important issue. In a sign of progress, however, Hispanics reported experiencing less unfair treatment in stores, at work and especially by police/courts in 2007 than in 2004.

As an organization committed to inclusion and unity, we at BRIDGES for a Just Community believe the media has a tremendous impact on human relations and a responsibility for fair treatment in their reporting. I for one appreciate living in a region where we can meet with media leaders to discuss these issues and gain their support for promoting a welcoming, united and caring community for all who want to live and work here.

For the last 40 years, Hispanic Heritage Month has been a national celebration of the contributions of Hispanics in our country. The media and community-at-large are stepping up efforts to celebrate these contributions. We encourage everyone to participate by making an effort to get to know your Hispanic neighbors and participating in some of the many events and activities. For more information about BRIDGES for a Just Community or the Hispanic Heritage Month awareness campaign, please visit www.BRIDGEScincinnati.org.