



Arturo Villar, HispanicMarketWorks.Org's publisher, is leading the dialogue among the organization's members and its contributors. His number, 305 785-2784 and his address, [avillar@hispanicmarketworks.org](mailto:avillar@hispanicmarketworks.org). We suggest two ways to start the discussion:

1. Send Arturo your reactions to today's articles and we will publish them or respond immediately
2. Send Arturo your point-of-view on any issues that affect the Art of Reaching Hispanics and we will publish them or we'll get back to you with suggestions to start the Conversation

It is now your organization: make it vibrant, make it useful, make it grow, and let's enjoy it.

## FocusON Immigration

### U.S. Chamber of Commerce Pushes Congress on Immigration

In spite of their opposition to immigration reform as President Obama and most democrats have proposed, Republicans leaders in Congress are said to be preparing new efforts to write and pass immigration legislation.

With the support of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, these lawmakers are preparing more border-security legislation and are drafting bills offering additional visas and permits for low-skilled and high-tech workers. Bipartisan discussions are under way in the Senate on legislation to revamp the visa program for farm workers.

The Chamber has even warned GOP lawmakers that they have two years to enact "a vigorous program aimed at meeting the needs of the

American people" or risk losing their majority. The Chamber wants Congress to act primarily on business priorities such as an immigration overhaul, and to enact "a vigorous program aimed at meeting the needs of the American people" or risk losing their majority.

Tom Donohue, the Chamber president, has said he wants Republicans to act on immigration despite the political furor created when President Obama in November eased deportation rules for millions of undocumented immigrants already in the country. "There's one thing they could do right now, and quickly—pass a bill," Mr. Donohue said, referring to the Republican outcry over Mr. Obama's executive actions. "You're the dog that caught the truck. Now, figure out what to do with it."

The Chamber head thinks the 2016 presidential race offers both parties further incentive to change the current system. "Would you want to run for president in either party if you were opposing an immigration bill?" he asked.

### The Light on Immigrant Small Business

[Bringing Vitality to Main Street: How Immigrant Small Businesses Help Local Economies Grow](#)

A report by Americas Society/Council of the Americas and the Fiscal Policy Institute

With more than 40 pages of data and analysis, the report addresses the challenges of revitalizing central city business districts at a national level and provides an in-depth qualitative look at how immigrant entrepreneurship has promoted economic growth and neighborhood revitalization in Nashville, the Twin Cities, and Philadelphia.

**The presentation of the report will be broadcast live on Wednesday January 14 at 6:30pm ET Tune in and join the conversation:**

[Livestream.com/ASCOA](#) | [@ASCOA](#) | [Facebook.com/ASCOA](#) | [#NYCimmigration](#)

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FocusON Social Media

## One Social Media Mistake You're Making (and Four Ways to Fix It)

by Mike Volpe CMO of HubSpot, an inbound marketing and sales software

Sophisticated marketers measure everything from website traffic and page views to form submissions and email click-through rates. But when measuring social media, most rely on fluffy metrics, such as "new followers" and "increased brand awareness."

Only 1 in 3 marketers can measure the ROI of their social media efforts, according to Social Media Examiner. In other words, most businesses have no idea whether their social strategy is even working.

That wouldn't have been surprising not too many years ago, when the world was still trying to make sense of Twitter and Facebook; as long as companies were present on social sites back then, marketing was doing its job. Today, though, these channels should be second nature for marketers, and not measuring their impact on the company's bottom line is a big mistake.

Marketers are expected to double their social spend within the next five years, according

to the CMO Survey, so being able to prove the value of social media to your business is more important than ever. The C-suite doesn't want to hear that a good chunk of Marketing's budget last quarter was invested in social buzz; it wants to know how that buzz fueled real results—not to mention how you're using those results to influence and shape your marketing strategy.

Luckily, marketers today have tools, data, and insights at their fingertips to tie social efforts to hard metrics.

It's time for businesses everywhere to start thinking of social media as revenue-building, not just brand-building. Here are four ways to tackle your social efforts with a results-driven approach.

### 1. Set Tangible Goals

Measuring your social media efforts starts long before you even tweet, post, or publish anything. From the get-go, you should have clearly defined goals for what you want to accomplish with social. The trick is that those goals have to be tangible.

Most marketers make the mistake of saying they plan to "boost engagement" or "increase awareness"; such vague objectives make it tough to evaluate progress or analyze the final outcome. And if you want to effectively evaluate social, you need numbers.

To come up with those numbers, you need

to figure out what matters most for your business and will have the most positive impact on it.

After that analysis, you might, for example, decide to boost engagement via Twitter 20%, increase the number of leads generated from Facebook three-fold, or reach 15,000 LinkedIn followers by the end of the year.

No matter how aggressive or modest the target, it has to be attainable.

### 2. Put Your Results in Context

Remember getting an allowance from your parents when you were a kid? That \$5 a week felt like winning the jackpot... until you found out one of your friends was getting \$10 a week. Similarly, your social media results shouldn't be evaluated in isolation; you need benchmarks against which to measure your metrics.

For example, let's say you received 40 Twitter clicks this month, and that's a record for your business... so it's safe to say your Twitter strategy is in good shape, right? Wrong. You need data beyond your own to know what "good shape" actually looks like for businesses like yours.

Industry benchmark reports can help put your results into perspective, but to really know how you're social media efforts stack up you should be comparing your results to companies with similar-size followings.

THE  
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LATINO  
SPORTS  
NETWORK

Choose a handful of companies to investigate on your own or look for social media tools that can whip up benchmark data that fits your social media reach. That way, you can discover whether 40 Twitter clicks is high, low, or standard.

To be able to set goals that will actually have an impact on their business, marketers need context around how they're performing on social.

### 3. Measure Down to the Dollar

Not long ago, some 41% of companies had no idea how social media was affecting their business financially, according to an eConsultancy survey from 2011.

Your Facebook efforts, for example, might be having a direct impact on your company's bottom line; you just need to prove it. Tracking leads from their very first interaction all the way through the buying process is crucial. If your Facebook page brings in 30 new leads one month, you should be savvy to how many of those become customers down the line.

Customers who initially found your business through Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn can and do bring in revenue, not just retweets or shares. Attaching a dollar value to social used to be wishful thinking, but now marketers can link their efforts directly to revenue.

More marketers need to apply closed-loop marketing across social channels to tackle ROI. If you haven't yet, identify the solution or tools that make sense for your business and can seamlessly tie your social efforts to conversions and sales.

### 4. Let Results Be Your Guide

Your social strategy should never be set in stone; it should be fluid and improved upon continually. But to be able to improve, you have to have insight into what's working and what isn't.

Marketers who aren't measuring social media results can't confidently say which channels need more attention or why one platform performs better than another.

If you've been pouring the same resources into both Google+ and LinkedIn for months, for example, and you are finding that one has much lower audience engagement than the other, don't keep doing the same thing you've always done. Instead, dive in to the analytics and reassess the investment your team is putting into each platform. Don't just track your metrics, analyze them so that your resources are always fueling growth. Your ROI will thank you.

Every business is different. As a result, each business will have unique social media marketing strategies. But all businesses should all have one, fundamental thing in common: a commitment to measuring their efforts.

By setting quantitative goals, comparing your metrics to a larger landscape, diving into closed-loop reporting, and learning from your results, you will make social media an even more effective marketing avenue for your business.

Not to mention... you'll actually be excited to present to the C-suite at your next meeting.

### FocusON Millenials

A new survey from [NATPE/Content First and the Consumer Electronics Association](#) will be released at NATPE in Miami on January 22. The joint study found:

- 51 percent of millennials consider [Netflix very valuable](#), compared to 42 percent that feel the same for broadcast and 36 percent for cable.
- Only 55 percent of millennials prefer to watch [TV programming on a TV screen](#), but 85 percent report that they still do. Additionally, 28 percent prefer to watch TV on their tablet, and 19 percent prefer to watch programming on their laptop over a TV screen.
- 84 percent of millennials watched a full episode on a [streaming service](#) in the last six months, and 54 percent watched a full episode during its original broadcast.
- Millennials are turning to [streaming services over DVR devices](#): only 33 percent said they recorded an episode to watch with the use of a DVR.
- However, [Generation X](#) is a different story: 76 percent used their VOD service once or more a week, and regularly use DVR to avoid commercials.

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## HMW Market Snapshot: Chicago

Driven by rapid gains, more than two million Hispanics call Chicago home... and that growth shows few signs of slowing down, according to data from Geoscape American Marketscape DataStream: 2013 Series.

Today, 2,103,343 Hispanics live in the Chicago DMA, making it the No. 5 Latino market in the U.S. The market's total population stands at 9,762,632.

Since 2000, the number of Hispanics in the Chicagoland area has increased 40 percent while the non-Hispanic white and African-American populations have declined by 5 percent and 2 percent respectively. Over the same period, the Asian population posted a 45 percent gain to just over 572,000 residents.

The Chicago DMA includes 11 counties in Illinois as well as five counties in northwest Indiana.

Hispanics have been an important driver of Chicago's population gains since 1990 when their numbers stood at 873,451. Between 2000 and 2014, the number of Latinos increased from 1,497,599 to 2,103,343. Forecasts call for the Hispanic population in Chicago to grow to 2,299,805 by 2018.

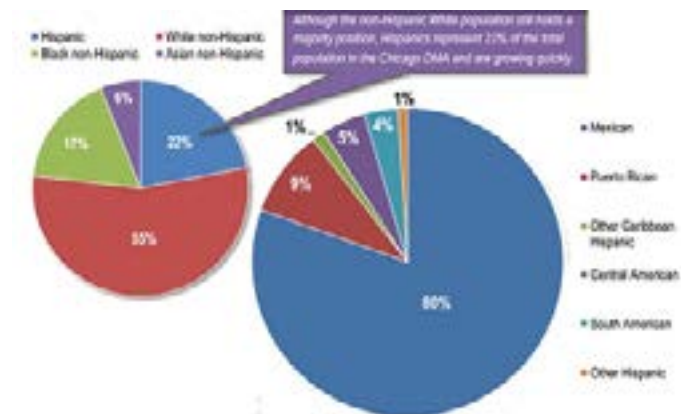
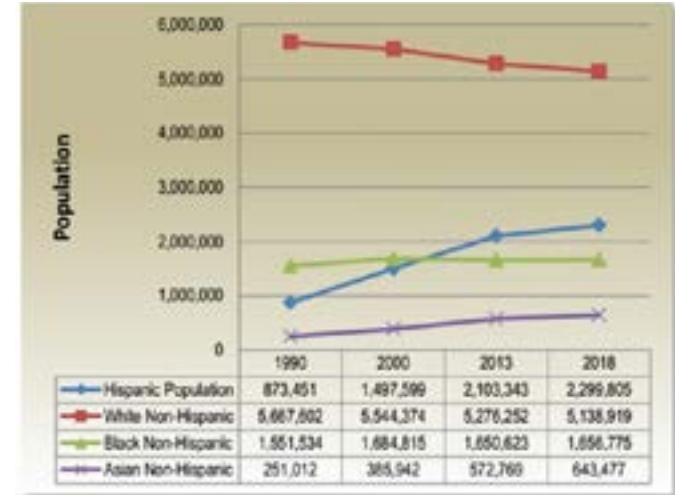
Mexicans comprise nearly all of the Latino population in Chicago, representing 80 percent of the total. Puerto Ricans

make up 9 percent of the market's residents. Minuscule pockets of other Latinos (1 percent), Central Americans (5 percent) and South Americans (4 percent) round out the total.

More than 50 percent of Chicago's Hispanic residents are fully bilingual and bicultural - 44 percent prefer to speak English and most were born in the U.S. Another 25 percent are bicultural, speaking English and Spanish equally.

The majority of Chicago's Hispanics describe themselves as:

- "Americanizado" (16 percent) – English-dominant, third generation U.S. born, with few Hispanic cultural practices
- "Nueva Latina" (28 percent) – English-preferred, second generation U.S. born, with some Hispanic cultural practices
- "Bicultural" (25 percent) – bilingual, emigrated to the U.S. as a child or young adult, with many Hispanic cultural practices
- "Hispano" (16 percent) – Spanish-preferred, speaking some English, immigrant who arrived as an adult more than a decade ago, with predominantly Latino cultural practices
- "Latinoamericana" (15 percent) – Spanish-dominant speaking nearly no English, immigrant who arrived as an adult less than 10 years ago, with primarily Hispanic cultural practices



Source: [Geoscape](#), the American Marketscape DataStream™ Series

## FocusON Communication

### Hispanic Media Advocate Applauds Title II Move

By Dave Seyler, *Inside Radio*



Recent remarks from FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler indicate that a Title II approach to regulating the internet is in store and The National Hispanic Media Coalition (NHMC) expressed its approval.

Title II lets the FCC regulate telecommunications providers as common carriers, and President Obama urged the commission to use Title II to impose net neutrality rules that ban blocking, throttling, and paid prioritization.

The organization said it has been in favor of strong internet rules for some time. It stated, "NHMC has long recognized that preserving an Open Internet is one of the foremost civil rights issues in the digital age. For Latinos and other traditionally disadvantaged Americans, the Open Internet is vital for an increasingly large array of reasons, including telling their

own stories in light of a mainstream media that excludes these communities or portrays them in a stereotypical manner. Without these rules, nothing will prevent ISPs from ruining the experience of Internet users by slowing down access to their favorite websites or blocking access altogether."

"Based on Chairman Wheeler's remarks, the FCC seems a step closer to standing with dozens of Congressional leaders, hundreds of organizations, and millions of people that seek to protect the Open Internet as the incredible platform that it is today, particularly for Latinos and other underrepresented and underserved constituencies," said NHMC Policy Director, Michael Scurato. "Of course, there is still much work to be done and we are still several weeks from knowing the details of this proposal, which are vitally important."

"NHMC commends the FCC and Chairman Wheeler's serious examination of Title II as a means to ensuring the Internet remains open," stated NHMC Executive Vice President and General Counsel, Jessica J. González. "While Chairman Wheeler did not fully delve into which provisions of Title II might apply to broadband providers, I hope the Commission recognizes that many other important policy goals are addressed in Title II — namely, ensuring universal access and adoption of broadband, protecting consumer privacy, and providing access to those with disabilities."

## FocusON Health

### Wellth is Wealth

By Elsa I. González, *Strategic Planner at Dieste to Provoke Action*

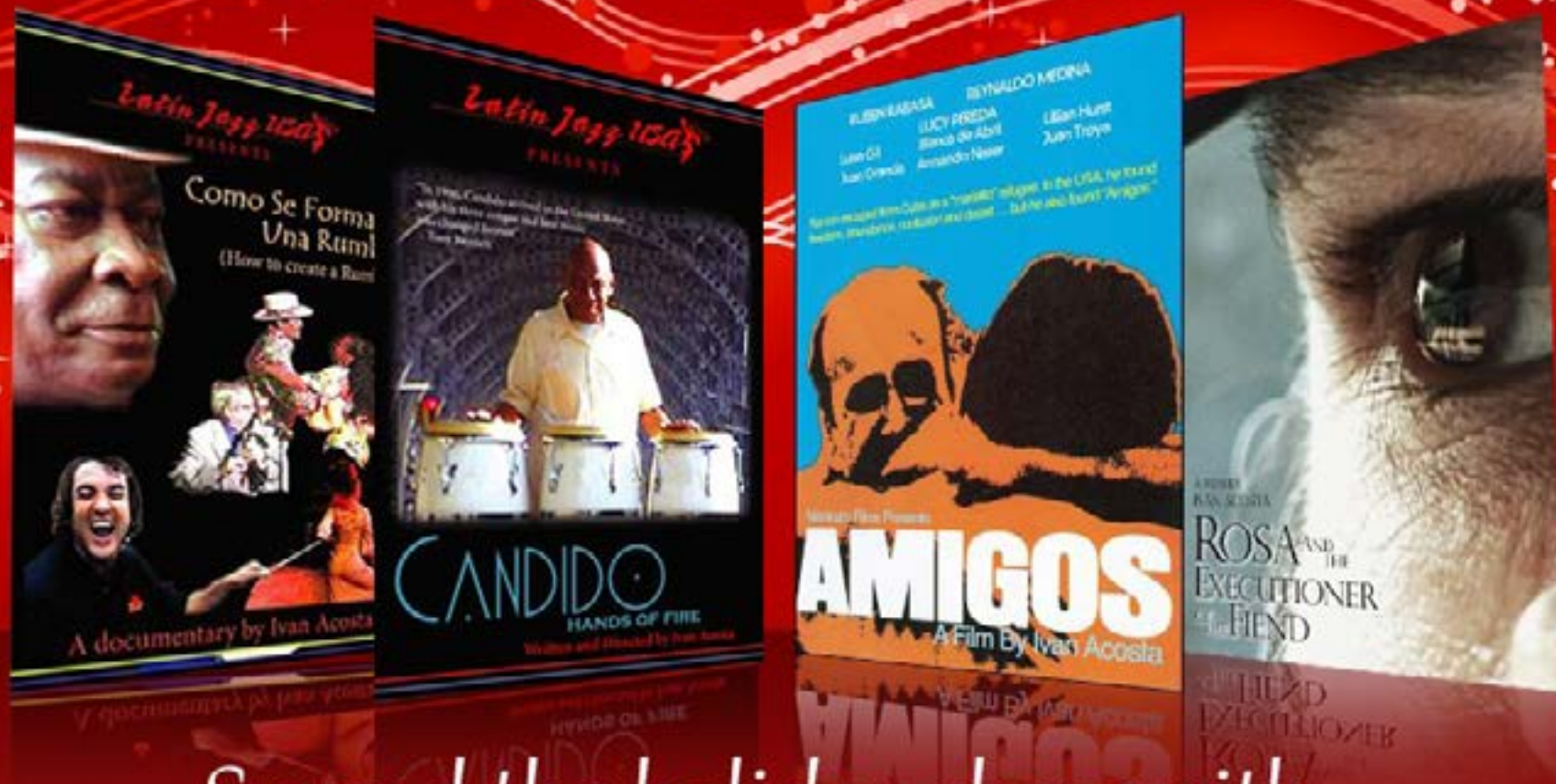
A balanced lifestyle has become the new achievement, simply put in one word: wellness.

We know that "work hard, play hard" is unsustainable, making wellness more valuable than ever. So not only do we seek to be physically healthier, we want to be mentally and spiritually better, more productive and ultimately happier.

The notion of well-th is here to stay, as people demand goods and services around this emerging holistic wellness value proposition. Clean slate or not, 2015 will be the year to redefine ourselves – but most importantly, to find a new harmony between work and life.

Here's to our best year yet... Happy and Well-thy 2015!





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also on NETFLIX and YOUTUBE

## FocusON Marketing

### Hispanic Online Marketing In Review

*Created by Captura Group, the New York-based Hispanic Digital Agency*

Having ended 2014, it is a good time to reflect on what transpired through the year, analyze what happened, and apply that analysis to the future.

Overall, it was a great year for Hispanic online marketing: more research substantiated the importance of the Hispanic digital consumer, powerhouse digital companies made significant investments in the space, and the World Cup proved that Hispanic online consumers will engage with digital content that engages them.

Below are some Hispanic online market highlights from 2014:

#### The Conversation is Finally Starting to Shift from “Why” Market to Hispanics Online to “How” to Market to Hispanics Online

As I outlined this summer, there is abundant research supporting the fact that a critical mass of Hispanics are online and that Hispanics are voracious digital consumers, especially across mobile and social channels.

In fact, Hispanics spend most of their time consuming digital media and most marketers now understand that to reach the nation’s largest minority, who control \$1.2

trillion in buying power, digital is a must. What is not as easily understood is how to reach them. Not only are marketers faced with a consumer segment that is extremely diverse in terms of language preferences, geography, country of origin and level of acculturation, the Total Market debate and relatively small budgets make the “how” to market to Hispanics online a challenge.

That said, I am glad to see the conversation move towards the “how” as marketers realize the importance of online Hispanics to their business goals.

#### Facebook Goes All In with Hispanic Offering

Last year, Facebook introduced the U.S. Hispanic affinity segment, allowing marketers the ability to reach the reported 23 million Hispanics who use the world’s largest social network.

This year, Facebook upped the targeting ante further splitting the Hispanic affinity segment by language: Spanish-dominant, English-dominant, and Bilingual. Not only does this new segmentation give marketers some guidance into “how” to target Hispanics online, it also provides some insight into the fact that Hispanics use both English and Spanish online. Facebook’s data shows that 42% of Hispanics use Facebook in both languages, 40% use Spanish while the remaining 17% use primarily English.

The Hispanic affinity segment, coupled with a recent announcement of a study designed to “understand the roles culture and technology play in how U.S. Hispanics communicate and consume media,” are a clear indication that Facebook gets the why and how of marketing to Hispanics online and is investing in this

segment.

#### Google Launched Latino Themed Domain .SOY

In October, Google made a clear move in the U.S. Hispanic market by introducing .SOY, a web domain aimed at Latinos. Google describes .SOY as “the domain name for Latino identity and expression on the web,” and a way to connect with online Hispanics.

However, reactions to the Latino-focused domain name have been mixed. Supporters like Ana Roca Castro, founder of LATISM, call it an “epiphany of a new era for the Latino community,” while critics, including Latino Rebels, say the Latino domain panders to online Latinos and it’s “obvious that such a move by Google is all about making more dinero.” Whatever side you are on, this initiative is a clear indication that Google believes in the U.S. Hispanic market and if they do, my assumption is that many marketers will follow.

#### Online Video for U.S. Hispanics is the Real Deal

We know that online video is booming, especially among Hispanics. The 2014 World Cup provides quantifiable evidence to support this point. According to AdAge, this year’s World Cup generated a whopping 672 million online video views for brands. That’s 30% more than the 2014 Super Bowl.

This, coupled with the fact that Hispanics spend 90 minutes more viewing videos on a digital device than the average American, points to a clear tactic for how to market to Hispanics online.

Now that most marketers have moved beyond the “why” market to Hispanics online, I look forward to helping answer the “how” in 2015.



## Leading the Change: JCPenney's Latina Brand Strategy

By Roberto Ruiz, SVP - Strategy  
& Insights at Univision  
Communications



Lyris Leos of JCPenney shares her brand's story at UCI's Leading the Change Forum.

### Why Latinas?

JCPenney knew going into 2014 that this year was a decisive one for the brand's health, forcing them to take bold and drastic measures to achieve success in repositioning the brand to consumers.

Despite the fact that JCPenney serves about 50% of families in the U.S. they pinpointed their efforts heavily on their Latina brand muse because, as they put it, "[The Latina] is the new general market." Her penchant for being image conscious, seeking attention, and following trends made her a perfect target. "New trends means new clothes means more sales, so we're constantly trying to reach out to this consumer," Leos said.

### "We Had to Book a Bet"

Putting Latina customers at the middle of their strategy, JCPenney took a chance on a non-traditional female marketing approach this year. They looked to the "Biggest Party in the World," the

FIFA World Cup, to effectively reach Latinas whom they found to be just as likely as men to follow their favorite teams and watch the games. With powerful "Soccer is for Girls" messaging, JCPenney struck a chord with Latinas, tying their "when it fits, you feel it™" brand anthem (translated in Spanish as "cuando te sientas bien, lo sientes™") to the teams and countries they were most passionate about with creative celebrating that "Passion fits us nicely."

And the bet paid off, with the campaign outperforming all prior Hispanic market campaigns on brand health, social, purchase consideration and persuasion metrics – the rebound the brand needed in 2014.

### Fighting the Good Fight

Like many multicultural marketers before her, Leos noted the challenges that come with asking those within pedigreed organizations (JCPenney is a 113-year old brand) to think and allocate resources differently. But she encouraged her peers at our event to "Keep fighting the good fight," knowing that leading change may be uncomfortable, may be tense, but it can pay off in spades. For JCPenney, that means letting their Latina insights continue to lead the brand connection strategy for key events and occasions throughout the year, like Easter, Mother's Day and Back to School — all to better connect with the Hispanic consumer, and in turn, the total market.

*Want to know more? Search #leadingthechange on Twitter.*

### FocusON Us

## Latinos . . . By the Numbers

By Esti Giordani & Idelisse Malavé

Right now, one in six Americans is Latino, but in three short decades, it will be closer to one in three. Increasingly, the U.S. public is aware that Latinos are the largest and fastest growing racial/ethnic group in our country, yet neglect the implications for the future, or move beyond dated or distorted preconceptions of Latino life.

Latino Stats: American Hispanics By the Numbers (forthcoming later this month from New Press) was written to support a shift in how Latinos are seen and represented. Sifting through the profusion of available data, we gathered the most telling facts to fashion a more accurate portrait of the contemporary Latino experience with glimpses of the past and future. From politics and the economy to popular culture, the arts, and ideas about race, gender, and family, Latino Stats both catalogs the inequities that plague Latino communities and documents Latinos' growing power and influence on American life.

Our research has found that the numbers are often at odds with conventional wisdom. Yes, at 14% Latinos still have the highest dropout rate in the country, but that rate dropped by nearly 50% in the last 20 years. And in 2012, the percent of Latino high school graduates enrolling in college surpassed that of White graduates. More broadly, Latino is still synonymous with "immigrant" for many, yet two-thirds of Latinos

living in the U.S. were born here. While Latino's growing power at the voting booth is regularly recognized, how we benefit the economy is often overlooked: by the end of 2015 Latinos will wield \$1.5 trillion in buying power. These numbers are just a few examples of the realities of Latino life in this country.

Whenever possible, we augment data on Latinos as a pan-ethnic group with information on the different Latino national origin groups. Our intent was to note the commonalities across national origin groups without masking differences. While most Latinos identify first by country of origin, they also share a meaningful sense of shared fate. Three quarters of us believe that our "success depends on the success of other Latinos/Hispanics."

Statistics, of course, have their limitations. In exploring economic, political, social and cultural facets of Latino life, numbers simply cannot capture all the nuances. But they can aid efforts to change how Latinos are seen and treated. Numbers are often an excellent entry point to the stories behind them, the stories that reach hearts and change minds. Ultimately, Latino Stats is a tool for advocates, educators, policy makers or anyone who wants to better understand the full American experience.

Esti Giordani, a New York-born Puerto Rican, is a writer living and working in Los Angeles. Until recently, she was a communications strategist and blogger for the Social Transformation Project. She is the daughter of co-author Idelisse Malavé.

Idelisse Malavé is an organizational consultant who ran the Tides Foundation in California for eleven years

and was vice president of the Ms. Foundation. She co-authored, with Elizabeth Debold and Marie Wilson, Mother Daughter Revolution. Born in Puerto Rico, she grew up and lives in New York City. She can be reached at [idelisse@imalave.com](mailto:idelisse@imalave.com).

## FocusON Culture

### Expert Fears Spanish Language's Extinction in U.S. Southwest

*By Francisco Miraval, who writes for EFE*

Rapid changes in the use of the Spanish language in the Southwest may lead to the language's extinction in coming decades in the region unless bilingualism is accepted and promoted, a University of Colorado expert said.

Devin Jenkins has found that in southern Colorado and northern New Mexico, areas with a large population of Spanish and Mexican descent, the use of Spanish is no longer growing.

In other areas of the United States, however, Spanish is flourishing with the arrival of new immigrants, Jenkins, who speaks Spanish fluently and has gathered information about the subject for the past 35 years, said.

"The change of language by the third generation is, simply, the process in which immigrants' grandchildren tend to speak only one language, the one prevalent in their communities, and not the language of their immigrant ancestors," he

said.

In some parts of Texas, Arizona, Colorado and New Mexico, less than one in three grandchildren of immigrants speak Spanish, compared to major cities in California and South Texas where two out of three young people preserve their grandparents' language.

"Language extinction happens all the time everywhere in the world," Jenkins, a Spanish teacher and director of the modern languages department at UCD, said.

"Those languages are the cultural link with the past," Jenkins said. "Losing them is losing a piece of our own culture. That's why all efforts to preserve a language are commendable."

In the Southwest, the efforts include studying why someone speaks in Spanish or ceases to do it, who uses the language and what benefits the children and grandchildren of immigrants derive from being bilingual or from speaking only in English.

Changes in language usage affect family relationships since grandparents may not be able to communicate with their grandchildren, Jenkins said.

"There is little gain here," Jenkins said.

"Those who promote English-only policies say that people who speak only English have better chances to succeed," Jenkins said. "But that's not the case. Knowing only one language reduces a person's abilities, while being bilingual doesn't mean that the person is less proficient in English."

# FOX DEPORTES ENDS YEAR ON A RECORD-BREAKING NOTE

Most watched FIFA Club World Cup in Spanish-Language television history



FIFA CLUB WORLD CUP  
MOROCCO 2014



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CONEXIONES

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Source: Nielsen NAB Live +3D PGM AVG all first run FIFA Club World Cup from PREL to FINAL (12/5/14-12/20/14), and 2000 for the same matches (12/20/12-12/22/12). Ranker: Live Team NAB Live +3D Dec 12-Dec 14, NAB Dec 17-Dec 21, NAB Dec 22-Dec 23. Subject to modification upon request.

## FocusON Education

### More States Mandate Tests on Civics

By Caroline Porter, *WSJ.com*

After years on the back burner of the nation's educational agenda, civics is making a comeback, with a number of states mandating new classes and a national push for high-school seniors to pass the same exam required of new citizens.

Recent national reports show students could use a lesson in civics, which generally studies the role of citizens in public issues and covers such topics as how to dissect current events or apply the Constitution to modern issues.

Recent federal policies, such as No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top, linked money to tests on math and reading, and concerns about a shortcoming in job skills has pressured leaders to focus more on science, technology, engineering and math.

Proponents say enhancing civics instruction could help reverse low voter turnout—about one in five adults ages 18 to 29 voted in the 2014 midterms, according to researchers at Tufts University's Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service—and address mounting frustration with dysfunction in Washington. They also say it can help increase engagement by minorities and the poor, who typically receive less civics education than more affluent and white students.

"There's a stronger sense from people now that we must do something in order to be functional as a nation and at the community level," said Meira Levinson, an associate professor of education at Harvard University who has studied civic-empowerment issues.

Meanwhile, coalitions in seven states have launched a growing

movement to require students to pass the U.S. citizenship exam before they can graduate. By the end of next year, proponents aim to introduce and pass legislation in 12 to 15 states.

But some backers of more civics study doubt the value of the 100-question citizenship exam, arguing it is more about rote memorization than learning how to be a better citizen.

"This is addressing the right problem with the wrong solution," said Ted McConnell, executive director of the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, a nonprofit that advocates for civic learning.

American high schools typically offered three classes in civics and government until the 1960s, according to Mr. McConnell's group. More typical nowadays is an "American government" class that focuses on the structure of democracy more than the practicalities of making it work. Mr. McConnell said schools need more hands-on instruction now, not another test.

Some caution that jumping into civics instruction could invite teachers' political biases into the classroom. "Teachers need training on how to lead discussions on controversial issues," said Anna Saavedra, associate policy researcher for RAND Corp, a nonpartisan nonprofit, who supports greater attention to civics in the classroom. "There are ways for teachers to learn that, but it's a learned skill."

For a project last year on gun rights, Ji Lee asked her 12th-grade students to talk with people outside their schools and homes about the issues to become more familiar with asking questions and getting answers. This year, they are also focusing on free-speech issues and developing a blog.

"There has definitely been a push to make students be engaged," said Ms. Lee, who teaches English, American government and economics. "It's a significant move forward."

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