

Art for Our Community: A Community Forum on Creating and
Sustaining Connections for Latin@s Through Art in Pensacola, FL

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Introduction

In 2012, Latin@s made up 16.9% of the total United States population and have been growing significantly, making up for 55.4% of the nation's population growth from 2000 to 2011 (Garcia, 2013). While this population is growing to becoming an influential population in this country, Latin@s are currently lacking in representation and resources, including the arts. According to Americans for the Arts (2013), in 2008, 26% of 18-24 year-old Latin@s reported that they grew up with an arts education. The Latin@s of Pensacola, Florida are not exempt from this reality. With the recent loss of an important communal access to Latin@ arts, a community forum will be held to determine the best plan for creating an arts program that will once again connect the Latin@s of Pensacola communally and culturally.

The Community Forum

The Problem

While the Latin@ population of Pensacola only accounts for 4.6% of the city's overall population according to the United States Census, the population has been steadily growing, moving from a 3.3% population since 2010, reflecting the nation's overall Latin@ population growth. Yet even though this population has been growing in Pensacola, there are very little resources and cultural activities offered to Latin@s. Particularly, there are few ways for Latin@s living in Pensacola to connect artistically and culturally through communal means. Unfortunately, three of the most significance ways Latin@s have been connecting with each other are no longer available; La Costa Latina (a bilingual newspaper for Latin@s in the Gulf Coast), the Hispanic Resource Center (HRC), and the Latino Festival, all operated by Grace Resendez McCaffery, had to be shut down due to lack of funding (Resendez McCaffery, 2014). The loss of the Latino Festival is especially devastating in our community, as it was a very popular annual event in which Latin@s were able to connect with each other and the community when there were little to no opportunities outside of this event. The Festival allowed for Latin@ and non-Latin@ businesses to be involved with the Latin@ population, and provided a stage to showcase the uniqueness of Latin@ arts and culture, which drove most people to attend the event (Resendez McCaffery, 2014). With the Latino Festival gone, Pensacola is lacking in opportunities for Latin@s to celebrate their arts and culture communally. Through this community forum, community members and leaders will discuss how to create and sustain a Latin@ arts program that utilizes and encourages educational growth and communal unity.

The Setting

The community forum will take place at the First City Art Center (FCA) in Downtown Pensacola on the 3rd of May, a Saturday, starting from 9:00 AM and ending at 12:00 PM. FCA is non-profit organization that offers popular fundraising events and distinctive programming primarily focusing on glassblowing, glass bead making, clay sculpting, and pottery (FCA, 2014). Among many of its offerings, the center offers a venue for learning that is not limited to its primary programming and is dedicated the concept of community, providing a varied amount of outreach programs. FCA offers space rental “for the pursuit of learning, comradeship, and fundamental community enrichment” (FCA, 2014), making it the ideal environment for the forum. The forum will also be streamed live and recorded through YouTube to engage with those that cannot be physically present and to provide an automatic documentation of the forum.

The Participants and the Discussions

The community forum will be open to the public yet will be primarily advertised to the Latin@ population of Pensacola, through social media posts and flyers sent to Latin@-owned businesses, churches that offer non-English masses (mainly Spanish masses), schools with a Latin@ student population, and so on. For each discussion to take place in the forum, there will be a facilitator that gives a brief speech in the beginning of the discussion and then moderates the rest of the discussion. Danette Marie Albino, an art instructor and the planner of the community forum, will open the forum with a welcome message briefly discussing the agenda and rules of conduct. Albino will also close with facilitating a brainstorming discussion on deciding the mission and activities of the Latin@ arts program, choosing a date for the next meeting to decide on possible venues,

advertisement, and fundraising strategies for the program, and wrapping up any possible points of discussion not addressed or addressed enough during the forum. Grace Resendez McCaffery will be facilitating a discussion on Pensacola's lack of resources and cultural opportunities for Latin@s and its affect on the community, recounting her leadership role and experiences in the Latin@ community of Pensacola in the beginning of the discussion. Favianna Rodriguez, a prominent artist and activist for Latin@ and im/migrant rights, will be facilitating a discussion on the significance of the arts to Latin@s, both culturally and politically, through a Skype video call, recounting her experiences and sharing her knowledge. Meredith Doyen, the Executive Director of the First City Art Center, will be facilitating a discussion on the process of creating and implementing a community arts program in Pensacola. There will also be a volunteer moderator for the YouTube live stream that will speak for those engaging in the chat feature. All attendees are encouraged to speak and will be asked to be respectful of others' opinions and speaking times.

The Agenda

Date/Time: Saturday, May 3, 2014 9:00 AM and ending at 12:00 PM

Location: First City Art Center, Building C Classroom

Attendees: Danette Marie Albino, Grace Resendez McCaffery, Meredith Doyen,
Favianna Rodriguez, various community members

OBJECTIVE

Discuss the lack of arts and cultural opportunities for Latin@s in Pensacola, the consequences of the lacking opportunities, and the benefits of creating an arts program.

Decide the arts program's activities and its mission. Choose a date for next meeting.

SCHEDULE

9:00 to 9:15: Welcome – Danette Marie Albino

9:15 to 9:45: Discuss Pensacola's lack of resources and cultural opportunities for Latin@s and its affect on the community – Grace Resendez McCaffery

9:45 to 10:15: Discuss the significance of the arts to Latin@s, both culturally and politically – Favianna Rodriguez (Skype Visit)

10:15 to 10:45: Discuss the process of creating and implementing a community arts program – Meredith Doyen

10:45 to 11:15: Brainstorm and decide the mission and activities of the Latin@ arts program. – Danette Marie Albino

11:15 to 11:30: Choose a date for the next meeting to discuss and decide on possible venues, advertisement, and fundraising strategies for the arts program; wrap-up – Danette Marie Albino

11:30 to 12:00: Refreshments and Snacks

ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES

Set-up: Danette Marie Albino

YouTube: TBA

Minutes: TBA

Refreshments and Snacks: TBA

References

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