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Smithsonian Collects Hispanic Advertising History

National Museum of American History Adds Artifacts From the VOTO Campaign

The Smithsonian's National Museum of American History will add materials and advertising artifacts from AHAA: The Voice of Hispanic Marketing's 2000 VOTO Campaign. The donation—made during the annual conference in Miami April 19—continues a collecting initiative established in 2015 to assist the museum in telling the story of Hispanic advertising history.

VOTO was a pro bono, non-partisan campaign designed to increase Latino voter registration and participation during the 2000 presidential election and to demonstrate the growing importance of the Hispanic market. It began with an invitation from then AHAA president, Al Aguilar, to all member agencies to submit concepts, storyboards and rough ideas to share at the annual conference. The firm Casanova Pendrill developed a print campaign and the broadcast spots. A second print campaign was developed by the firm Sanchez & Levitan. The VOTO campaign uses humor to make the point that only by voting can individuals make important decisions about government that otherwise would be made by others.

“We’re delighted to welcome the materials for AHAA’s voter registration campaign, ‘VOTO,’ into the national collections,” said Kathleen Franz, the museum’s business history curator. “In this presidential election year, the VOTO campaign reminds us that diversity and participation are key to understanding the American experience, and the tagline ‘If you don’t choose, someone else will do it for you’ is as fresh today as it was in 2000.”

The bilingual campaign ran in several local and national publications, including *TV Guide en Español*, the *New York Daily News*, the *Miami Herald* and *People en Español*. Several other companies and broadcasting corporations committed to backing the campaign with millions of dollars of pro bono airtime and production support. The campaign was broadcast through MTV, Telemundo, Univision and on radio and phone services were provided by AT&T.

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Another important element of the VOTO campaign was the collaboration and support of voter registrations groups including the Southwest Voter Registration Project and Midwest Voter Registration Project, which supported the campaign with field activities for registrations. The campaign is credited with registering more than 1 million Hispanics to vote in 2000.

“The visionary goal and results of the VOTO campaign is an important historical milestone of AHAA,” said Aguilar. “The VOTO Hispanic voter registration and participation campaign is a landmark initiative that helped set the path of today’s growing political power and influence of Hispanics in America.”

In July 2015, the museum opened the “American Enterprise” exhibition which prominently features the story of advertising and marketing.

In October 2015, AHAA helped facilitate the donation of objects and archives from six Hispanic owned and operated advertising agencies from across the United States to the museum.

About AHAA: The Voice of Hispanic Marketing

Founded in 1996, AHAA: The Voice of Hispanic Marketing is the national trade organization of all marketing communications and media firms with trusted Hispanic expertise.

About the National Museum of American History

Through incomparable collections, rigorous research and dynamic public outreach, the National Museum of American History explores the infinite richness and complexity of American history. It helps people understand the past in order to make sense of the present and shape a more humane future. The museum is continuing to renovate its west exhibition wing, developing galleries on democracy and culture. For more information, visit <http://americanhistory.si.edu>. The museum is located on Constitution Avenue, between 12th and 14th streets N.W., and is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (closed Dec. 25). Admission is free. For Smithsonian information, the public may call (202) 633-1000.

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