HispanicTrending

50,000 Watts of Hate: Hispanic media group seeks FCC inquiry

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By Wendy Norris

A pilot study to evaluate hate speech on conservative talk radio found an astounding 334 instances of anti-Hispanic bias uttered in a sample of brief 40-minute segments from three national syndicated shows, including one widely broadcast in Colorado. A Hispanic media organization is now calling for the Federal Communications Commission to probe whether there is a connection between odious radio yakking and hate crimes.

The Hate Speech on Commercial Talk Radio study by the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center dished up some very concerning news, especially in light of a 2008 FBI report that anti-Hispanic hate crimes are on the rise among all offenses motivated by ethnicity/national-origin — from 529 offenses (or 42.8 percent of that year's total) in 2003 to 775 offenses (61.7 percent of that year's total) in 2007.

The preliminary analysis reveals a systematic and extensive use of false facts, flawed argumentation, divisive language, and dehumanizing metaphors that are directed toward specific vulnerable groups. Thus far, the data show a recurring rhetorical pattern in which vulnerable groups were identified as antithetical to the core values attributed by the host to himself, his audience, and the nation. These groups were then linked to social institutions that were presented as complicit. In effect, target groups are characterized as a direct threat to the listeners' way of life.

In response, the National Hispanic Media Coalition is urging the FCC to explore the extent, effects and potential counter-responses to ethnic bias on radio. A statement released by the group on its FCC petition evoked none other than free speech bully pulpit heavyweight and then-presidential candidate Barack Obama from a September 2008 address to the Congressional Hispanic Caucus:

This election is about the 12 million people living in the shadows, the communities taking immigration enforcement into their own hands…they're counting on us to stop the hateful rhetoric filling our airwaves, rise above the fear and demagoguery, and finally enact comprehensive immigration reform.

The group makes clear that it is not asking the FCC to consider reinstating the 1949 Fairness Doctrine, a rule that required broadcasters to treat controversial subjects in a "fair and balanced" manner. The Reagan Administration repealed the doctrine in 1987 when the president and former actor pushed to deregulate the media industry.

That's likely to be of little solace to Michael Savage who gets quite prickly under criticism. The bilious, nationalistic radio talker is a one-man cottage industry for insulting Mexican immigrants, gays, Muslims and autistic children among many other targets.

Savage's own show — which airs throughout Colorado on major AM stations in Colorado Springs, Greeley and Grand Junction — was among the three programs studied by UCLA that were found to perpetuate anti-Hispanic hate speech. The other scrutinized programs were the nationally syndicated "Lou Dobbs Show" and Los Angeles-based "The John &

Ken Show."

Source: The Colorado Independent

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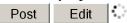Digg This | Save to del.icio.us

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