



CONGRESSIONAL HISPANIC CAUCUS

116th Congress

LEADERSHIP

Rep. Joaquin Castro (TX-20)
Chair

Rep. Ruben Gallego (AZ-07)
First Vice-Chair

Rep. Nanette Diaz Barragán (CA-44)
Second Vice-Chair

Rep. Adriano Espaillat (NY-13)
Whip

Rep. Veronica Escobar (TX-16)
Freshman Representative

MEMBERS

Rep. Pete Aguilar (CA-31)
Rep. Salud Carbajal (CA-24)
Rep. Tony Cárdenas (CA-29)
Rep. Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr. (CA-39)
Rep. Lou Correa (CA-46)
Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto (NV)
Rep. Jim Costa (CA-16)
Rep. Henry Cuellar (TX-28)
Rep. Antonio Delgado (NY-19)
Rep. Sylvia R. Garcia (TX-29)
Rep. Jesús G. "Chuy" García (IL-04)
Rep. Jimmy Gomez (CA-34)
Rep. Vicente Gonzalez (TX-15)
Rep. Raúl M. Grijalva (AZ-03)
Rep. Mike Levin (CA-49)
Rep. Ben Ray Luján (NM-03)
Sen. Bob Menendez (NJ)
Rep. Debbie Mucarsel-Powell (FL-26)
Rep. Grace F. Napolitano (CA-32)
Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (NY-14)
Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard (CA-40)
Rep. Raul Ruiz, M.D. (CA-36)
Rep. Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan (MP)
Rep. Linda T. Sánchez (CA-38)
Rep. Michael F.Q. San Nicolas (Guam)
Rep. José E. Serrano (NY-15)
Rep. Albio Sires (NJ-08)
Rep. Darren Soto (FL-09)
Rep. Xochitl Torres Small (NM-02)
Rep. Norma J. Torres (CA-35)
Rep. Lori Trahan (MA-03)
Rep. Juan Vargas (CA-51)
Rep. Filemon Vela (TX-34)
Rep. Nydia M. Velázquez (NY-07)

January 1, 2021

Dr. Carla Hayden
Librarian of Congress
101 Independence Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20540

Dear Dr. Hayden and Members of the National Film Preservation Board,

I write to you as Chair of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) to ensure that the experiences of American Latinos are well represented in the films selected for preservation in the National Film Registry at the Library of Congress. The National Film Registry is a national treasure that preserves films of historic, cultural, and artistic significance for generations of American scholars, filmmakers, and viewers. The films that are selected for preservation are a crucial part of our shared national heritage. Given the film industry's continued exclusion of Latinos, we must therefore make a special effort to ensure that Latino Americans' accomplishments in the film industry are appropriately celebrated and included in the National Film Registry.

For over a century, movies have been central to how Americans understand each other and our country's history. However, the film industry's ongoing exclusion of Latinos unfortunately not only affects the Latinos seeking opportunities in the industry, but also affects how Latinos in everyday life are perceived, stereotyped, and too often misunderstood. This is why the CHC is dedicated to improving Latino representation in the film industry. During the 116th Congress, the CHC has engaged directly with industry stakeholders such as studios, talent agencies, unions, and guilds, as well as Latino advocates, filmmakers, writers, and actors.

With this in mind, we write to you today respectfully asking that the National Film Registry work to increase its number of films that focus on American Latino experiences, or that highlight the artistic and technical accomplishments of American Latinos in the film industry. We recognize that the National Film Registry can only select films for preservation, not produce them. As such, the registry is constrained by the very lack of Latino representation in the film industry that the CHC has sought to address. Nevertheless, the naming of a film to the registry affords important

recognition to that film, increases viewer and scholar interest, and ultimately sends a message to the industry about the films that will have lasting value to future generations of Americans.

We are encouraged that several important Latino films have already been included in the National Film Registry. Films like *Salt of the Earth* (1954), *I Am Joaquin* (1969), *Zoot Suit* (1981), *El Norte* (1983), *Stand and Deliver* (1988), and *Real Women Have Curves* (2002) all capture key moments and themes of struggle, sacrifice, and triumph prevalent in Latino communities throughout the United States. Many of these films made important contributions to the national awareness and understanding of issues like labor rights, immigration, and educational disparities that the CHC seeks to address legislatively today. Other films tragically never received the wide-distribution or recognition that has been afforded to other classics of American cinema, despite their ongoing relevance to Latinos today. As such, we respectfully ask that the National Film Registry explore ways to highlight the Latino-focused films in the registry, to ensure that these important examples of American Hispanic heritage not just be preserved but seen.

As a next step, we also wish to formally nominate the 1997 film *Selena* for inclusion in the National Film Registry in 2021. Directed by Gregory Nava and starring Jennifer Lopez and Edward James Olmos, the film depicts the life, remarkable rise, and tragic death of Tejana music star Selena Quintanilla. The film also touches on important themes of cultural identity and assimilation faced by Mexican American communities as they navigate their personal connections to two cultures and languages. The film has become a beloved icon of Latino culture and has found widespread mainstream success, proving once and for all that Latino stories are American stories. Given its importance as a work of Latino cinema, we believe it is deserving of preservation at the Library of Congress. We trust you will give *Selena* careful consideration, and hope to see it included in the titles added to the National Film Registry in 2021. We also expect to identify other films which feature the American Latino experience and urge you to devote careful consideration to Latino films when considering films for the registry as well.

Movies remain a truly American form of storytelling, uniquely accessible and democratic as an art form. The exclusion of Latinos from the film industry, the lack of support and opportunity given to Latino films and filmmakers, and the barriers that Latino-focused projects face from development through distribution mirror the ways in which Latinos continue to be excluded from the full promise of America—a problem that will not be solved until our stories can be fully told. We believe the Library of Congress and the National Film Registry are well-positioned to help dismantle that exclusion by preserving important cultural and artistic examples of America's Latino heritage. The CHC stands ready to help partner in any meaningful effort to work towards that noble goal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "JOAQUIN CASTRO". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Chairman Joaquin Castro
Congressional Hispanic Caucus