



SPANISH- LANGUAGE MEDIA: **CRISIS=** OPPORTUNITY

WITH A POPULATION OF MORE THAN 44 MILLION AND A BUYING POWER APPROACHING \$1 TRILLION, LATINOS ARE THE FASTEST GROWING GROUP OF CONSUMERS IN THE NATION.

But while the Latino population continues to grow, and the market explodes, Spanish-language media presents a crisis situation for Screen Actors Guild members. When these productions choose to go non-union, as they often do, they create inequalities in both pay and working conditions. Exacerbating the problem is the issue of runaway production.

A dedicated group of Guild members sees this crisis as a great opportunity.

Just as actors in the 1930s faced exploitation and united to fight it, a group of Spanish-speaking actors decided in 2004 to organize and do the same.

Today, 25 Screen Actors Guild members from Los Angeles, New York, Miami, Puerto Rico, Chicago, Texas and Washington, D.C. comprise the Guild's National Spanish Language Media Task Force.

"I have not felt before the hope and strength that this newly minted task force gives me," says Gy Mirano, a New York Division member who belongs to the task force. "It is an intelligent and informed group that sees the big picture, ready to work with discipline and common sense, without overreacting and with objectivity."

Guided by director of Spanish Language Organizing Carlina Rodríguez, the task force was reactivated in 2006, just as the Guild's Organizing, New Media, and Research and Economics Departments were created.

"It is time for us to think like the producers and strive to understand the business like they do," said Todd Amorde, the national director of organizing. "The combined efforts of these new departments will make it easier for

BOB DAMICO
AMERICA FERRERA,
star of Guild production
Ugly Betty, which is under a
SAG Spanish-dubbing contract.

the task force to access the information they need to achieve their goals."

Screen Actors Guild President Alan Rosenberg added, "We need to organize this market for the Latino actors who deserve access to union benefits such as health care and residuals. Organizing this market would also create new work for both our Latino and non-Latino members. And the additional revenue generated for the Pension and Health Plans benefits the entire SAG community."

EQUAL JOB, EQUAL PAY

Corporations understand the role of Latinos in the national economy, and they're vying for those dollars.

The number of Hispanic viewers in the U.S. rose from 22.2 million (or 9 percent of the U.S. population) during the 1992-93 television season, to 38.9 million (or 14 percent of the U.S. population) during the 2005-06 television season.

With the recent announcement of the use of a single Nielsen Television Index, Spanish- and English-language television audiences will now be measured side by side, putting the Spanish- and English-language television networks on a level playing field.

The task force recognizes the challenges that the Spanish-language media market presents for SAG members and understands how crucial it is to develop strategies to increase work opportunities in all Spanish-language entertainment programming.

Thus, the task force identified five primary areas of concern: commercials, Spanish-language dubbing for second audio programming, movie trailers, telenovelas and new media.

"Our primary goal is to turn non-union jobs into SAG-covered jobs," said Hernán de Béky, Hollywood Division member and national chair of the task force. "But if we find that a SAG English-language commercial or movie trailer or any other SAG project is to be produced in Spanish, then we need to work to make sure that it is covered under a SAG contract.

"In other words, we're saying an equal job deserves equal pay."

BUYING MORE TORTILLAS THAN BREAD

Spanish language TV advertising alone grew 13.9 percent in 2006 to \$4.28 billion. Santiago Pozo, CEO of Arenas Entertainment, which produces, distributes, and markets entertainment created by Latino filmmakers for the U.S. Hispanic market, eloquently described the magnitude of this audience in a recent news article.

"In America today, we are buying more tortillas than bread," Pozo said.

"So, if the number of commercials produced 'en Español' has increased in accordance with the growth of the Hispanic population in the U.S.," asks Manny Alfaro, a task force and New York Division member, "why is it that our SAG Spanish-speaking commercial actors are not working?"

According to an article in the March 2007 issue of *Shoot* magazine, the diversity of locations such as Brazil and Argentina and their lower production costs continue to drive producers to Latin America.

A report on the impact of overseas commercial production, compiled by the Screen Actors Guild Commercials Research Department, indicates that between 13 percent and 27 percent of television commercials that currently air in the U.S. were produced outside of the U.S. The primary international locations for producing U.S. commercials are Canada and Latin America. The report specifically cited the increased demand for Spanish-language commercials and the perceived cost savings of this "runaway" approach to production.

"Our Commercials Contract has language that states that our signatories who produce commercials outside of the U.S. will not engage non-union principal performers primarily for reasons of economy or economic advantages," said Ray Rodriguez, the Guild's deputy national executive director for contracts.

"But that doesn't mean some producers won't try," he said.

To address reports of signatories attempting to produce their commercials non-union in the U.S., which often includes offers of

below-scale payments or even "buy-outs" (a flat fee that waives residuals), the task force proposed a research study of the top 100 national commercial advertisers. That work has begun, but is in the preliminary stages.

"We want to make sure that SAG advertisers who produce commercials for both the English- and Spanish-language markets produce them under our contract," said Carlina Rodriguez. "We also want to find out if there are advertisers producing their English-language spots under our contract jurisdiction and attempting to produce their Spanish-language commercials outside of our jurisdiction. We would hate to think the advertisers feel that the work of our Spanish-speaking performers is worth less."

The Guild has activated a national toll-free hotline for reporting non-union commercials, she said. The number is (888) 297-4SAG (4724). (See sidebar on next page.)

"The phone line is available for anyone who wants to call in," Rodriguez said. "Our members are our eyes and ears. They know who is doing what and they must be involved. We've had great success based on information from our members and talent agents."

Based on one tip, the Guild was able to collect more than \$200,000 in compensation, including pension and health contributions.

DUBBING GOES SOUTH

While the growth of the Spanish-language market brings with it new work opportunities for Guild actors, the Guild and the task force must face the challenges of runaway production not only in commercials, but in Spanish-language dubbing of other scripted entertainment.

"We Latinos were by far the part of the SAG body most affected by productions going non-union and outsourcing after the 2000 strike," said Martin Kalwill, a task force and New York Division member. "In times of crisis, our Latino members have always been united and supportive of the issues concerning all of our members, and will continue to be."

In the early 1990s, there was an effort to organize the dubbing business, in particular the main recording studios that had been



EVA LONGORIA, of *Desperate Housewives*, a Guild dubbing signator

providing Spanish dubbing services to major Hollywood companies, but these studios decided to set up satellite locations in Mexico, Venezuela and other countries, employing voice actors not protected under a union contract.

"SAG must work to gain this work back. We must raise the consciousness of the industry and of all of our members who work on SAG Films and TV shows that are being dubbed into Spanish for broadcast in the United States," said Blas Kistic, a task force member from the Hollywood Division.

"Our fellow members certainly could show their support by asking that their voices only be dubbed by union members under a SAG contract in the United States."

The Guild's Spanish-language dubbing agreements already allow companies to employ SAG members to do this work. In 2005, when ABC became the first English-language network to offer all of its primetime programming in Spanish through second audio programming, Screen Actors Guild was able to reach an agreement to cover the work of the dubbing actors for such hit shows as *Desperate Housewives*, *Lost*, *Grey's Anatomy* and *Ugly Betty*.

GETTING INVOLVED

Today's organizing efforts in Spanish-language media will profoundly affect all Guild members' lives and the future of the Guild. It takes the entire membership to turn this crisis into an opportunity for not only Spanish-speaking members, but for the SAG community as a whole.

Together, members can create another viable revenue stream for SAG's pension and health coffers for decades to come. For more information on the work of the task force or how to get involved, contact Carlina Rodriguez, director of Spanish-language organizing, at carodriguez@sag.org.

Hotline For Reporting Spanish Language Non-Union Commercials: (888) 297-4SAG

When should you use the hotline?

- If you attend a casting session for a Spanish language commercial and you are not sure if the production is SAG signatory.
- If producers are offering payments below scale or a buy-out.
- If you become aware of a Spanish language commercial production to be produced non-union.

Please provide as much information as you can, such as the name of the advertiser, the advertising agency or production company, the pay rate, the location and the name of the casting director. The Commercials Department will investigate and follow up. You do not have to leave your name or contact number. All information will be treated confidentially. Thank you for doing your part to help create more SAG jobs!

**"SAG Ha Establecido Una Línea"
Teléfono Gratuita Para Denunciar Comerciales Non-Union Producidos En Español:
1-888-297-4SAG (4724)**

DRAMA, INTRIGUE, ROMANCE A LOVE-TRIANGLE—ALL ONLINE!

In July an online novela for worldwide consumer giant Unilever debuted, featuring a group of Screen Actors Guild members from Miami. The Spanish-language webisodes were made available for viewing on Univision.com.

Mi Adorada Malena (My Beloved Malena), a six-episode drama series broken into five- and six-minute installments, integrated the advertiser's brand **Caress** into the storyline and allowed viewers to vote for one of two endings.

"I was extremely honored to be part of this groundbreaking collaboration," said Marlene Marcos, one of the stars. "It was a triumphant leap forward. I hope that other SAG advertisers will follow suit."

The project received a significant amount of press because of its unique nature, and was hailed by Unilever as a product integration success story.

"I am happy to see that finally a Spanish-language television network had the guts to break away from the traditional format of telenovelas that they've been using for the past 40 years and turned this project into a new media format," said Carlos Guerrero, another Miami Screen Actors Guild member who acted on the project.

Guerrero added, "My hat's off to the director, Jose Luis Vazquez, who fought to shoot it film-style and brought a young, fresh perspective to the project, attracting a younger audience."

To be sure, traditional media formats like the telenovela will continue to evolve.

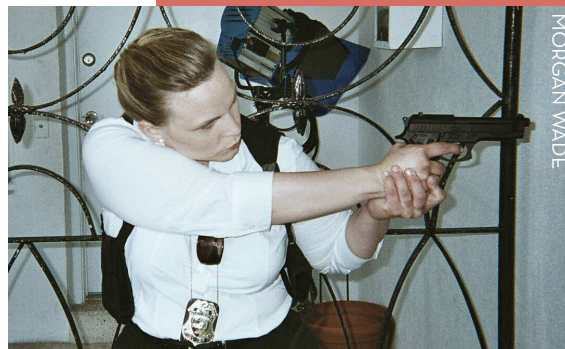
"It's an exciting time for Screen Actors Guild performers," said Mark Friedlander, the Guild's new media director. "These new hybrid content forms open up new work opportunities for all of our members."

According to online sources, Unilever Corp. employs about 180,000 workers and makes about \$50 billion in revenue worldwide from its brands of foods, beverages, cleaning agents and personal care products.

While Unilever was already a Guild signatory, the Screen Actors Guild Commercials Department wants to work with all producers, regardless of the size of their budgets, said Sandy Kincaid, national director of Commercial/ Industrial Contracts.

"The contract is negotiable under made-for-Internet content," said Kincaid. "I'd like to encourage companies that create non-union commercial content to come to us and see what we can arrange."

Interested producers can reach the Commercial/ Industrial Contracts Department by calling (323) 549-6858.



SAG member **MARLENE MARCOS** on the set of *Mi Adorada Malena*—the first-ever interactive telenovela