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Smithsonian Latino Center Celebrates 10th Anniversary; More Than 300 Projects Funded in the Past Decade

The Smithsonian Latino Center kicked off its 10th anniversary year with a congressional reception Tuesday, Feb. 27 to celebrate the publication of the book “Hispanic Heritage at the Smithsonian: A Decade of Latino Initiatives,” which highlights exhibitions, public programs, research, publications and educational opportunities made possible by federal funding and private sector support.

“Past is both precedent and prologue,” said Smithsonian Regent and National Latino Board member Rep. Xavier Becerra. “These last 10 years of successful projects, exhibitions and educational initiatives speak volumes to the importance of the Latino Center. The center deserves our gratitude, as well as our assistance, so that it can make the next decade even more successful than the last.”

“The Smithsonian’s commitment to Latino initiatives is enduring and active across the entire Institution,” said Smithsonian Secretary Lawrence M. Small. “We are more determined than ever to make sure that every American has access to the stories of all Americans.”

“Latinos have been enriching America’s cultural and historical fabric for centuries. We work to ensure that their contributions are highlighted at the largest and most important museum complex in the country,” said Pilar O’Leary, director of the Smithsonian Latino Center. “For more than a decade, Congress has been instrumental in this endeavor through its funding of the Smithsonian Latino Initiatives Pool.”

Since the center was established by the Smithsonian Board of Regents in 1997, the Latino Initiatives Pool has distributed more than \$12 million in federal funds to more than 300 projects of various Smithsonian museums and affiliated organizations across the country. The federal funding often provides seed capital for Latino-themed projects at the Smithsonian, which is subsequently matched by private sector support.

“Ford is proud to continue our long history of supporting projects that honor the achievements of the Hispanic community,” said Raquel “Rocky” Egusquiza, director of Community Development and International Strategy at the Ford Motor Company Fund. “Bilingual exhibitions like ‘Our Journeys/Our Stories: Portraits of Latino Achievement’ have traveled across the country and introduced thousands of people to Latino culture thanks to our partnership with the Smithsonian Latino Center.”

Another important part of the center's work is educating the next generation of Latino cultural leaders through its two flagship educational programs: the Young Ambassadors, a national program for high school students gifted in the arts to promote pride in Latino culture and identity; and the Latino Museum Studies Program, an annual forum that brings together mid-career cultural professionals and graduate students with senior scholars and curators to generate discussion and new knowledge about the interpretation and representation of Latino heritages in museums, research centers and cultural and performing arts institutions across the United States.

The Smithsonian Latino Center works with all the Smithsonian museums and the National Zoo. Efforts are underway to make all of the Institution's Latino collections accessible through the center's award-winning Web site.

Other noteworthy projects include the following:

- "Myth, Mortals and Immortality: Works from Museo Soumaya de Mexico" at the Smithsonian International Gallery
- "Ana Mendieta: Earth Body, Sculpture, and Performance 1972-85" at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden
- "¡Azúcar! The Life and Music of Celia Cruz" at the National Museum of American History
- "Stamps with Personality: Roberto Clemente" with the National Postal Museum
- "Arriba! The History of Flight in Mexico, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean" at the National Air and Space Museum
- "Latino Music Archives," with Smithsonian Global Sound
- "Tradiciones/Traditions: Latino Music Recordings," with the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage
- "Hispanic Designers," a publication with the National Museum of American History
- "Arte Latino" at the Smithsonian American Art Museum

In addition, the Latino Center has supported indexing the papers of Latino and Latin American artists at the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art.

The Smithsonian Latino Center ensures Latino contributions to arts, sciences and the humanities are highlighted, understood and advanced through the development and support of public programs, scholarly research, museum collections and educational opportunities at the Smithsonian Institution and its affiliated organizations across the United States.

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