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## In Response to Executive Orders That Affect Immigrant Communities Across the Nation, Museums Must Reaffirm Cultural Diversity and the Valuable Contributions of Immigrants

*In a series of executive orders signed in late January, President Trump ordered the construction of a wall along the US border with Mexico, restricted federal funds to sanctuary jurisdictions, and imposed a ban on travel to the US from several Muslim-majority countries. Members of the [AAM's Latino Professional Network](#) speak out against these decisions, and share a call to action.*

Mexican and other Latin American, Caribbean, and many more international communities have made an undeniable contribution to our society. Their cultural legacies enrich US museums and their participation strengthens our capacity to create powerful intercultural dialogs through exhibitions, educational, and public programming and other initiatives. These public dialogs reaffirm the American ideals of an inclusive and pluralistic democracy.

The President's recent actions undermine the core values of the American society, foster bigotry, and generate fear and isolation among communities across the nation. What's more, they will negatively affect the important work of museums engaged in international collaborations and cross-cultural exchange as a way to foster mutual understanding and dialog between nations and peoples.

[The Latino Network](#) emphasizes the critical role museums play in affirming cultural diversity and fostering inclusion in communities across the United States. Regarding our national dialog on immigration, museums play vital roles including the following:

- **Museums are sanctuaries:** They provide safe spaces for conversations, to support democracy, and they act as cultural catalysts where individual voices are heard and where collective knowledge is built.
- **Museums are a hub for civic engagement:** They play a crucial role in today's global political climate as spaces for inspiring civic engagement.
- **Museums are memory holders:** They preserve for future generations the cultural heritage and values of the US society—including the valuable contributions of immigrants.
- **Museums are cultural diplomacy agents:** They actively participate in international collaborations that build bridges across cultures and foster mutual understanding and cultural exchange.

We encourage our colleagues in the museum community to lead by example and actively assume these roles as an effort to advance the national dialog on immigration. These ideas and values are incorporated into AAM's [new issue brief](#) on Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion. Two aspects of

the brief are significantly relevant to the current situation that affects immigrant communities across the nation:

- **Museums bring communities together to heal divisions and foster dialog:** They foster creativity and innovation, and help us understand and appreciate our differences. Museums are increasingly providing trustworthy spaces to have community conversations about a wide range of issues.
- **Museums bear witness to history:** They preserve and protect more than a billion objects and help communities better understand and appreciate cultural diversity. They tell important stories by collecting, preserving, researching, and interpreting objects, living specimens, and historical records.

[The Latino Network](#) of the American Alliance of Museums remains committed to represent the needs of Latino professionals working in museums and cultural institutions in the United States, as well as to serve as a liaison between the US museum community and Latin American and the Caribbean museums, research centers, and cultural institutions.

### **CALL TO ACTION**

In these times of growing xenophobia, intolerance, and public mistrust of institutions, museums have an active role to play in affirming diversity and fostering inclusion. In response to the executive orders and actions against immigrants, the Latino Network will continue to offer its support to US museums and museums in Latin America and the Caribbean, including those affected by the recent actions of the current administration.

The Latino Network is facilitating **nationwide conversations** for anyone in the museum field interested in promoting their museums as spaces for community dialog and for celebration of our cultural heritage and diversity.

The Latino Network is developing **inclusion guidelines** as a tool for museums to better understand and engage the growing Latino audiences. [According to the US Census Bureau](#), the Latino/Hispanic population in the United States reached 56.6 million as of July 1, 2015, representing the nation's largest ethnic or racial minority.

We invite museums and museum professionals nationwide to join us in our efforts to affirm the value of cultural diversity. For more information about how to participate in these conversations, and/or to be part of the inclusion guidelines taskforce, please contact Latino Network at [LatinoNetworkMuseums@gmail.com](mailto:LatinoNetworkMuseums@gmail.com) or via our social media channels.

Antonio Rodríguez, Chair

Margarita Sandino, Vice – Chair

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Raquel Aguiñaga-Martínez, Past Vice – Chair

Ranald Woodaman, Conference Session Development

Mariano Desmarás, New England Regional Representative

## ABOUT THE LATINO NETWORK OF THE AMERICAN ALLIANCE OF MUSEUMS

The Latino Network Professional Committee of the American Alliance of Museums represents the needs of Latino professionals working in museums and cultural institutions in the United States. We offer expertise to US museums interested in better understanding of Latino issues and engaging Latino audiences through the development of exhibitions, collections, public programs, and education initiatives.

The Latino Network serves as a liaison between the US museum community and Latin American and the Caribbean museums, research centers, and cultural institutions.

See a related article by Eduardo Diaz, Director of the Smithsonian Latino Center, ["Our Institutions as Sanctuaries"](#)