

TEACHER GUIDE

# 2000 DOC. #8: Newsweek Article "But Where's the Salsa?"

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Campaign managers for both parties knew that more Latinos would vote than ever before in the Presidential elections of 2000. They also knew that soon Latinos would surpass African Americans as the largest "minority" population in the country. They also knew that before long Latinos would represent the majority of the voting population in certain Southwestern states.

George W. Bush made a point of reaching out to traditionally Democratic groups, especially Latino voters. He met with the National Council of La Raza and aired 13 campaign commercials in both English and Spanish targeting Latino voters. As recently as the 1980s the Democrats could count on receiving 85-90% of Latino votes in presidential elections. Bush challenged that assumption in the 1998 Texas Governor's race and received 49% of the Hispanic vote (Jamieson, *Electing the President* 156). In the 2000 presidential campaign exit polls indicated that Bush won 31% of Latino votes (Ceaser 163).

The document you will see next is an excerpt from a *Newsweek* magazine article that appeared approximately two months before the election.

> **Distribute** the handout and **project** the document.

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| QUESTION         | <b>What are the messages in this article?</b>  |
| SUGGESTED ANSWER | The Latino vote is important. Bush advertisements focus on "soft" topics like personality while Gore focuses on "hard" issues like education and Medicare.   |
| EVIDENCE         | "Latinos could prove decisive come November," "[for Bush] personality, not policy, is the key to Latino hearts – and votes," "Gore puts the issues front and center."  |
| QUESTION         | <b>According to the article, why are both Bush and Gore so intent on winning Latino votes?</b>   |
| SUGGESTED ANSWER | According to the article, many Latino voters are "young and up for grabs politically, concentrated in states with rich electoral votes. In key battleground states like Florida, Illinois and New Jersey, the Latinos could prove decisive..." |

## 2000 DOC. #8

**But Where's the Salsa?**  
 Bush and Gore will spend record sums to woo the Latino vote—with very different ad campaigns

**BY AMIN CEMPO-FLORER**

**TO GET A FEEL FOR THE** story, support between George W. Bush and the Latino community, watch this: Hispanic support TV spots have produced for the Bush campaign have had one thing in common: They're all up to the hip. A young Latino lad rubes up to the governor and high-fives him. A woman hush like a hawk says Bush will work for her the way she needs his hand-off. "She that great ones?" says Bush. "Did I talk about issues?" "No," she replies, "personality, not policy, is the key to Latino hearts—and votes."

Try telling that to Al Gore. In his Latino ads, Gore puts the issues front and center. Yes, he credits a baby, but with a cover-up (parenting child care). He also lists a woman (Medicare) and reads with a 100: Latino boy (after my school). Funny, dry stuff. But Latinos, predicts Democratic ad maker Forman-Gentner, will ultimately respond to issues, not media images. Bush can't run on substance. Confirmed alibi. "It's like selling Marlboro cigarettes or Escalade cars."

Who has the better strategy? Both camps agree on one point: the winner of the Latino vote will win because Hispanic electors prize the candidate who fights over nearly 30 million registered voters, most of them young and up for grabs politically, concentrated in states with rich electoral votes. In key battleground states like Florida, Illinois and New Jersey, Latinos could prove decisive come November. So Bush and Gore are prepared to spend up to \$100 million each to win their votes.

"This is the first time, certainly at the national level, when you're going to have both sides aggressively going after the community," says California 15. Both candidates are going all out to woo the Latino vote. And, of course, they're banking off their Spanish phrase books and unloading videotapes exercising verbal dexterity. Bush, for example, has been as he tries to roll his R's and G's

faithfully laboring over every consonant. Bush has reason to trust Sosa's decision to keep the old-fashioned look. The pace of Hispanic advertising. Sosa, 36, has been selling Latinos for decades on everything from Coca-Cola to Ronald Reagan. Two years ago he helped Bush capture roughly half of the Hispanic vote in Texas—a huge victory for Republicans. As a Latino, Sosa, 36, son's wife and business partner, remembers the gist of their ads: "If you got a chance to meet George W. Bush, it's how it might feel." Sosa's room has also made extensive use of Bush's heartthrob nephew George P. They've one night ad featuring him, all things said, and got, involving the Hispanic vote in a less getting (but still important) Spanish. That part of all this to portray Bush as a different level of Republican, one who embraces multiculturalism. Sosa "knew" to make Latino Republicans," says Sosa. "Hispanic, coalition of the Alliance of Latino Politics 2000." He tries to make Latinos comfortable with Republicans. "That's making some Latin Democrats uncomfortable. They think the Gore route of fact could use some history. In previous elections, the Democratic convention, some strategists concluded that the campaign would support a more multicultural ad push. The cultural footage, no creature, the kind of spots you change the channel on," says Antonio Gonzalez of the Bush/Cheney or Republican Education Project. "If you look at the Bush side, they're generous."

The ad man is just getting up. So far, Gonzalez has produced three spots and Sosa has only a few of these have run and only a modest impact on Florida, Illinois and New York. Future results may well be decided by the polls. Whoever the voters to see Gore and Bush making their appeals is equal. Gore and the Republicans ground Hispanics and Democrats could have been targeted. "We want to present," says Sosa. "And by 2002 and 2006, we better be getting it out of the minority party hands." That competition drive-by both parties means that Latino voters have already won.

**LATE 1990s: Some wonder if Gore's stress on issues—or equal—will translate into Hispanic votes.**

**FEEL THE LOVE: In Bush's ads, he bonds with Latinos and hopes to show that not all Republicans are scary.**

**AL GORE**

28 NEWSWEEK SEPTEMBER 4, 2000

## Newsweek "But Where's the Salsa?"

### PowerPoint Slide

**QUESTION** Does this article focus on policy issues important to Latino voters or campaign strategies? What is your evidence?

**SUGGESTED ANSWER** The article focuses on campaign strategies, not substantive issues.

**EVIDENCE** the title, captions, and photos focus on campaign style and strategies; the article focuses almost exclusively on strategies for winning Latino votes and barely mentions issues outside of image making

**FURTHER QUESTIONS**

Does media coverage that ignores issues and focuses on campaign strategies hurt or help the democratic process?

Why is so much media coverage focused on “the horse race” of presidential campaigns rather than the issues? What media sources focus more on issues?

**CONNECTIONS**

(see thematic listing)

**Media Bias**

**Race**

**Target Audience** (Latinos)

- Compare this story with the 1968 (doc. #2) article about Robert Kennedy’s meeting with Cesar Chavez. Which story tells more about the candidate’s true connection with a Latino family or community? Why do you think so?
- Consider the nature of the changing electorate over the years and discuss why you find so few documents in this kit focused on candidate appeals to the Latino population.