

## **NIELSEN'S DARFIELD CONTINUES DISTURBING PATTERN WITH COMMENTS ON HISPANIC RATINGS ISSUE**

Nielsen Media Research's Senior VP of Hispanic Services, Doug Darfield (former Univision executive) was recently quoted in a trade publication responding to why Nielsen doesn't match census data for Nativity (U.S. born / non U.S. born Latinos) in their Hispanic samples despite overwhelming evidence that Nativity is the major factor determining media consumption among U.S. Hispanics.

**The following quote from Darfield was published in MultiChannel News' Hispanic TV Update, April 4th, 2007:**

*"It is amusing. The poor fellow [Robert Rose] really does believe there is some sort of conspiracy there. Getting the information from the old sample will show that this in fact is not what was going on and never was going on," he continues "My own personal belief is that what we're going to find out is that by controlling on language we are going to have the born inside/born outside number exactly where it needs to be because they are surrogates on some level."*

How is Darfield so sure that Nielsen is not over-sampling foreign born Latinos? The company has gone on record numerous times stating they don't ask that information. How can a research company, which makes its living on providing cold, hard and supposedly objective research, allow a key executive to make public assumptions without evidence or predict an outcome and still claim objectivity?

How does a multibillion dollar company like Nielsen allow a key spokesperson to make such broad, sweeping and irresponsible comments and still claim any credibility?

This, I'm afraid is modus operandi for this "objective" research company. When we first went public with concerns related to Nielsen's erroneous sampling of U.S. Latinos in November 2005, Nielsen's "spokesperson" Jack Loftus responded with public comments that bordered on hysterics that amounted to personal attacks rather than addressing the issue. His unprofessional and undignified comments were surprising. To see comments in full context go to [www.HelpChangeTV.com/press](http://www.HelpChangeTV.com/press)

In August 2006, Darfield and I along with other marketing and research professionals familiar with the issue were invited to participate in a debate at the Texas Association of Broadcasters (TAB) meeting in Austin.

The behind the scenes at that encounter proved to be very telling.

### **THE REST OF THE STORY**

Having known of Darfield from my Univision days, I held on to the belief that despite Nielsen's misguided methodology and Darfield's Univision connection, the company probably employed good, professional people who, if given the chance, would support a

more accurate TV ratings service. Darfield, Ed Rincón and the other participants of the debate team had a good, civil, pre-debate rapport. All in good spirit, nothing personal, just people who were on different sides of an important, if complicated, issue.

### **A THREAT OR A FAVOR?**

I was seated next to Darfield on the panel and just as the introductions began, he whispers over to me something to the effect “*don’t worry I won’t mention how low your ratings are.*” I was a little taken aback at what seemed like a not too veiled threat. Then I thought “*why do I care?*”

At AIM TV, our ratings are a source of pride for us, with over 1 million viewers weekly (according to Nielsen’s own studies), our broadcast syndicated shows provide, by far, the largest reach of any show in English targeted to U.S. born Latinos and we gladly use these ratings, just like the big media companies, to sell our advertising and to track our success. Our reach and ratings success is a big reason we do so well among Fortune 500 advertisers and have grown from 27 cities to over 100 the past five seasons. So disclose away! He’d be doing me a big favor.

I told Darfield as much, but realized right then and there that Nielsen Media Research was not just a company with misguided methodology and good people who wanted to do the right thing. It is a company bent on protecting its current financial situation at all costs, regardless of the outcome or tactics.

Darfield never followed through with his “threat” during his time at the podium, perhaps now realizing that what he had thought was a weakness (our ratings) was actually our strength. We were and are proud of our ratings (underreported though we believe, we make a very nice living off of them, thank you very much) and if Darfield knew anything about the TV business he’d know that, but he is in his own little “Nielsen” world, I suppose.

Darfield did manage to put at least one man in the sparse audience asleep with a presentation that seemed to fulfill a mission of “bore them to tears and maybe they’ll forget about the reason for the debate in the first place” going well over his time limit and expressing how “*satisfied*” Nielsen was with their current methodology. If I were making billions, uncontested, I’d be “satisfied” too. Over the past 7 years, I’ve traveled all over the U.S. in meetings with several hundred TV executives and I have yet to see anyone of their clients “satisfied” with Nielsen’s ratings (with the exception of Univision perhaps?).

When it was my turn at the podium, I used information in Darfield’s own presentation to prove the point that Nielsen does not properly sample U.S. born Hispanics. After the debate, he accused me of “intellectual dishonesty,” got very agitated and was led away. Video coverage of the debate can be found at [www.helpchangetv.com/video](http://www.helpchangetv.com/video)

Over the past two years, Nielsen Media Research has spent untold sums sponsoring Latino and minority media and not-for-profit organizations such as the **Annual Imagen Foundation Awards** (where Nielsen CEO Susan Whiting was honored for her “contribution” to the image of Latinos on Television, something akin to a victim throwing a dinner party in honor of their assailant), the **Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute’s Annual Conference** (that should keep lawmakers at bay), the **4th Annual Hispanic Television Summit**, **The Association of Hispanic Advertising Agencies**, and the list goes on and on.

### **WHY FIX A PROBLEM WHEN IT’S CHEAPER TO PAY THE CRITICS OFF?**

To me, their mission is clear. Why should Nielsen admit they are wrong and spend millions fixing something when they can spend much less on hush money keeping others who should be their harshest critics at bay? I’m surprised Nielsen hasn’t called me to head up one of their divisions with a nice, fat salary complete with benefits (I hear they have a great Healthcare plan).

As for me, Nielsen has accused me of acting in my own commercial self interest on this issue. This issue has costs our very small, very busy, independent company, tens of thousands of dollars in precious money and man hour resources (the websites don’t update themselves). Furthermore, we are not sure that a change in methodology would impact our business dramatically or even benefit our shows at all. But we are sure it would be a better, more accurate ratings service and in the end that should be the objective of everyone in the Television, advertising, research and marketing field.

**Taking on an issue of this magnitude is NOT fun and I don’t enjoy it.** It is financially, physically and emotionally draining and distracts us from our core business and creative missions. But right is right and this serious issue won’t get fixed unless Nielsen is forced to change, so I’ve vowed to not stop fighting until it’s fixed, completely and without bias.

### **INAPPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO A SERIOUS ISSUE:**

Later in the same trade article Darfield goes on to say about our efforts: “It is not going to change anything. [Laughter.] This is one of history’s greatest tempests in a teapot, and I give kudos to old what’s-his-name there for stewing up the industry about absolutely nothing.”

“Old what’s-his-name”? Ouch, that stings and as tempting as it is to sink to a level of name-calling, I prefer to stick to the facts.

### **THE FACT STILL REMAINS:**

Why aren’t U.S. born Latinos represented in the Hispanic sample matching U.S. census data like every other demographic consideration (sex, age, etc)? Why has Nielsen dodged the issue by first protesting vehemently then switching game plans and pretending

“Nativity” has no impact on TV viewing (which flies in the face of almost every other piece of research done on the subject).

Why did Nielsen commit to study the issue in January of 2006, yet has not reported any results in well over a year? Then they said they had a study from 2003, where is that study? Why isn't it publicly available?

Is it because they are waiting until they get the results they need so they can then say “nativity” is a non-issue and was really just a “tempest in a teapot”?

Judging by Darfield's comments, I'd bet on it. I now believe after reading Darfield's comments that if we see the results of a study at all from Nielsen, it will be for the sole reason of proving that their current methodology was not erroneous after all. They are just waiting on the “right” results before releasing them.

### **DARFIELD'S COMMENTS FIT THE NIELSEN PATTERN**

The fact that Darfield resorts to personal attacks isn't surprising or as disturbing as the fact that in the article he laughs and makes light of a very serious situation (the potential under-sampling of U.S. born Latinos, which means there are few TV programs for U.S. born Latinos and contributes to larger, very serious social issues).

Maybe he lacks the empathy gene or more likely he's just doing his job, carrying out orders for his multibillion dollar, monopolistic employer who doesn't give a damn about accuracy or the social implications of their mistakes, just their bottom line.

Hey, we all have to make a living, I understand. But we also all have to look at ourselves in the mirror everyday, and somehow, stomach what we see staring back at us and be able to sleep at night. Darfield and a few other folks at Nielsen may have a tough time doing that. As for me, I'm happy to report that I've been sleeping just fine.

MORE INFO:

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*Robert G. Rose's opinions are entirely his own and do not necessarily reflect those of Artist and Idea Management, Ltd. or American Latino TV, LLC.*