

National Park System Advisory Board



Citizen advisors chartered by Congress to help the National Park Service care for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

February 28, 2013

Tony Knowles
Anchorage, Alaska
C H A I R M A N

Director Jonathan B. Jarvis
National Park Service
Washington, DC 20240

Paul Bardacke
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Dear Director Jarvis,

Linda J. Bilmes
Cambridge, Massachusetts

On behalf of the National Park System Advisory Board, its National Historic Landmarks Committee, and our American Latino Scholars Expert Panel, we present to you a report entitled *American Latinos and the Making of the United States: A Theme Study*.

Leonore Blitz
Washington, DC

Since its establishment under the authorities of the Historic Sites Act of 1935, the Board has played a critical role in supporting the Secretary of the Interior and the National Park Service in carrying out the Act's mandate to "*Make a survey of historic and archeological sites, buildings and objects for the purpose of determining which possess exceptional value as commemorating or illustrating the history of the United States.*" (16 U.S.C. 462(b)). This Board is committed to the principle that the National Historic Landmarks program should represent the diversity of the American experience. To support this commitment, we asked the National Historic Landmarks Committee to review the composition of our 2500 National Historic Landmarks. Their analysis indicated that less than 8 percent of designated landmarks specifically represented the stories of Native Americans, African Americans, American Latinos, Asian Americans, women, and other under-represented groups. We have made a concerted effort to redress this imbalance; and, since 2009, have recommended forty properties for designation that reflect our commitment to represent the diversity of our shared heritage.

Judy Burke
Grand Lake, Colorado

Milton Chen
Nicasio, California

Rita Colwell
College Park, Maryland

Belinda Faustinos
Azusa, California

This report, *American Latinos and the Making of the United States: A Theme Study*, further supports that commitment. In concert with the 2011 White House Forum on American Latino Heritage, we formed a panel of prominent scholars of the American Latino experience to advise us, and the National Park Service, on engaging with the American Latino community to document their stories through the National Historic Landmarks and National Register of Historic Places programs, and to enhance the interpretation and educational programs at our national park units. This theme study, prepared under the Panel's guidance, contains sixteen essays by nationally recognized scholars addressing the contributions and experiences of American Latinos. Organized under four major sub-headings – *Making the Nation, Making a Life, Making a Living, and Making a Democracy* – together with a core essay that provides an overview of the American Latino experience from 1840 to the present, this theme study will provide a framework for supporting our many partners and communities throughout the nation in identifying buildings, sites, landscapes, and objects associated with these stories for designation and preservation.

Carolyn Finney
Berkeley, California

Ronald M. James
Carson City, Nevada

Gretchen Long
Wilson, Wyoming

Margaret Wheatley
Provo, Utah

With profound thanks to the members of the panel and essayists for their scholarship, commitment, and passion for this project, the Board believes that this is an important contribution to shaping the nation's understanding of its complex and diverse history, and to providing direction to the National Park Service's next century of engagement with the American people.

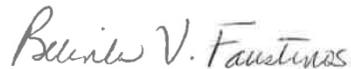
Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Tony Knowles in cursive script.

Tony Knowles
Chair, National Park System Advisory Board

Handwritten signature of Ronald M. James in cursive script.

Ronald James
Chair, National Historic Landmarks Committee

Handwritten signature of Belinda V. Faustinos in cursive script.

Belinda Faustinos
Co-Chair, American Latino Scholars Expert Panel