



**For immediate release
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Statement by The Latino Coalition on the improper political discourse at the Radio City Music Hall fundraiser for John Kerry

Washington, D.C. – “Whether you were born in this great country or reached it as an immigrant searching for a better life, we all hold in high regard the sacredness of our freedom of expression as granted by our Constitution. As free individuals, we have an inalienable right to express our religious, social, and political opinions without fear of being persecuted. What we don't have is the right to offend other people and denigrate our ethnicity in the process.

“John Leguizamo's comparison of Hispanics supporting Republicans to "roaches for Raid" (Jodi Wilgoren, "Kerry's Celebrity Fund-Raiser Is a Huge Bash," *The New York Times*, 7/9/04) is not only shameful coming from a Latino, but a sad display of the anger and rage that Kerry surrogates are willing to display without thinking twice about the consequences of their actions.

“If Latinos are going to join the movement of offensive, racial slurs against brothers and sisters who may disagree with them politically, what moral authority will any Latino have to raise his or her voice when others do the same?

“Regardless of political affiliation, all Hispanics and the entire country should repudiate such political discourse. When in the course of expressing political opinions one denigrates an entire segment of the population, one has only contributed to those who exploit the differences among the members of that community to keep them from achieving their full potential.

“As American citizens who value all individuals in public service, we ask Senator John Kerry to repudiate such comments and for Mr. Leguizamo to publicly apologize. To not do so is to agree with Mr. Leguizamo's notion that Hispanics who have supported Republicans or those who might still be undecided are nothing but roaches to the Kerry campaign.”

“Finally, we call on all Latino organizations to join us in repudiating these comments and to call on Senator Kerry to stand up against this shameful, offensive and bigoted rhetoric.”

The Latino Coalition is a non-profit, non-partisan organization based in Washington, D.C. TLC was established to address policy issues that directly affect the well-being of Hispanics in the United States. TLC's agenda is to develop and promote policies that will foster economic equivalency and enhance overall business, economic, and social development of Hispanics. For more information please visit their website at www.TheLatinoCoalition.com.

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