

Case Snapshot



The Context

The Pew Research Center reported in December 2014 that the U.S. Hispanic population has grown 592% since 1970, and between the 2000 and 2010 census, the percentage of people identifying as Hispanic or Latino made up more than half than U.S population growth.¹ These shifts are part of a larger demographic change for Latinos in the United States. Immigration is no longer driving Hispanic population growth.

Most newcomer stories in this country begin with the hustle and bustle, awe, and over-stimulation of dense urban metropolises like New York City, Chicago, or San Francisco, but today that story is changing. While large cities still serve as gateways for many new Americans, cities in the U.S. South are providing a different sort of opportunity. For many Latinos and their families, the South has become an attractive place to live because of plentiful jobs, the relatively low cost of living, and access to social and political networks.²

The Innovation

As leading cultural institutions in their respective cities, the Levine Museum of the New South (Charlotte, NC), the Atlanta History Center (Atlanta, GA), and the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute (Birmingham, AL) entered the Innovation Lab for Museums with the goal of creating relevant ways to engage the burgeoning Latino community. Using the arts as a tool, they felt, would help all members of the community learn more about population shifts and hasten the community's integration. Their innovation, *Latino New South*, created a learning network among the three institutions that aims to be responsive to community needs, desires, and feedback.

The Impact

The Innovation Lab for Museums provided the three institutions with a container for exploring new ideas as well as the space and time to engage them fully. The Innovation Lab, a program of EmcArts, was created to assist nonprofit organizations in designing and prototyping new ideas and to launch real-life projects that address complex challenges facing their organizations and the arts and culture field at large. Since developing *Latino New South*, each institution has learned that their ability to better engage with the community and have meaningful dialogue through listening has helped them expand their impact in critical ways, including:

- **Creating the “Listening Session,” a Structured Process For Gathering Community Input**
The Latino communities of Atlanta, Birmingham, and Charlotte have different settlement patterns, and finding a way to acknowledge the unique circumstances of each city was important. By building a framework around a specific issue, being strategic about whom to include in each conversation, encouraging participation, and creating ways for participants to continue engagement, *Latino New South* streamlined a process for dialogue.
- **Improved Programs And Activities**
In 2015, the community-generated exhibition *iNuevolution!: Latinos and the New South*, will travel to the three museums. The exhibition, an exploration of the demographic, social, economic, political and cultural impacts of Latino population growth in the American South, is a direct result of the *Latino New South* initiative.

The Lab

Latino New South created a set of techniques and insights that can guide museums in genuine outreach to Latino populations and other marginalized cultural communities. From their participation in the Innovation Lab, the Levine Museum, Atlanta History Center, and Birmingham Civil Rights Institute learned how to be more effective stewards of their communities' diverse cultures.