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From this week's Opinion

## Letters: Latino growth, Vocalo and WBEZ, big-budget bust

August 02, 2010

### Biggest Market Fact of all: Latino growth in Chicago

*Crain's* recent "Market Facts 2010" section (July 5) promised to give readers the "basics" on starting, operating and growing a business in Chicago. I congratulate *Crain's* for having accomplished just that by highlighting the demographic growth of a vital population, one that has propelled Illinois business forward over the past decade and will continue to do so in coming years.

Indeed, Latinos got front billing as the very first page in the section, highlighting just how much the community has grown in metro Chicago—to the tune of 35.7% since 2000. And this growth isn't in the communities we've traditionally associated with Latinos. Instead, Chicago's Loop, arguably the heart of regional business, has seen the city's highest uptick in Latino growth. And once-tiny Gilberts, with just over 1,200 residents at the 2000 census, saw a 25% increase in its Latino community. Gilberts' growth follows within a new growth norm, as a full 60% of Illinois Latinos now live in the suburbs.

While this demographic shift presents linguistic and cultural change to new areas, it also brings unprecedented economic opportunity. What wasn't captured in your maps and graphs is the fact that Latino homeowners purchased half of all new homes in the region over the past few years. Or the fact that Latinos are three-in-four new entrants to Chicago's labor market. Or that Illinois is home to nearly 40,000 Latino-owned businesses. If those statistics aren't compelling enough, readers will be even more surprised next year when the 2010 census data is made available.

The bottom line is that Latinos are a growing part of Illinois' economic engine—and more and more, they are neighbors and co-workers and executives in places where their numbers traditionally have been small. Thank you, *Crain's*, for highlighting the growth and contributions of this very important community.

SYLVIA PUENTE

*Executive director**Latino Policy Forum**Chicago*

### Vocalo vital to WBEZ

"Radio ricochet" (*Crain's*, July 26) might falsely lead your readers to believe that Chicago Public Media has decreased its commitment to serving diverse audiences through Vocalo (89.5 FM). The target audience for Vocalo continues to be young people of diverse racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds who share the same instinct for civic engagement that is so prevalent among our WBEZ (91.5 FM) listeners.

The WBEZ audience is 83% white, which puts WBEZ on par with most public radio stations. However, the racial composition of the Chicago region, which Chicago Public Media is legally bound to serve, is much more diverse than the current WBEZ audience. Vocalo is a reflection of our commitment to ensure that Chicago Public Media remains relevant for years to come to the residents of our community.

Vocalo has made an indelible impact on our more well-known programs, inspiring more meaningful

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