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PRESS RELEASE –PBS-Ken Burns

The American GI Forum of the United States, a National Congressional Charter Hispanic Veteran's organization with over 500 chapters nationwide and Puerto Rico, adopted a resolution showing a rejection of the Ken Burns WWII documentary because of its exclusion of Hispanics.

Hispanics have contributed to the defense of this nation since its inception over 230 years ago. Our role in WWII is constantly overlook and/or ignored by major media networks such as NBC's Tom Brokaw's "Greatest Generation.." Now a publicly funded network adds insult to injury by setting aside its responsibility to the nation's largest minority by relegating responsibility to local stations to correct a total injustice to the Hispanic legacy of contributions to WWII.

The American GI Forum of the United States calls for assistance and support from its Congressional representatives, National Hispanic organizations, Veteran service organizations, Native-American Veterans, Corporations and others who donate to PBS to demand that PBS correct this injustice to our community. Donors should question the discriminatory practices of the present administration of PBS.

- The American G.I. Forum calls for an immediate boycott of PBS and its 354 affiliate stations across the nation until such time that the Latino experience is included in Ken Burns "The WAR" PBS WWII documentary that is scheduled for release on September 23, 2007;
- The American G.I. Forum calls on all Latinos/Latinas and concerned others in the nation and Puerto Rico to withhold all membership and monetary pledge donations to PBS and affiliate stations until the Ken Burns "THE WAR" documentary is inclusive of the Latino WWII experience;
- The American G.I. Forum calls for an immediate Congressional investigation of PBS funding and grant awarding process to determine if existing review standards for all existing and proposed new programming is non-discriminatory and inclusive of the Latino experience in the country;
- The American G.I. Forum calls on all American Corporations to refrain from making future monetary contributions to PBS until such time that the Latino experience is included in the Ken Burns "THE WAR" PBS WWII documentary;
- The American G.I. Forum calls on PBS and affiliate stations to refrain from airing Ken Burns "THE WAR" PBS WWII documentary on September 23, 2007 until such time that the Latino experience is included in the documentary;
- The American G.I Forum calls on all Latino/Latina organizations and in the nation to join us in our fight to DEFEND OUR HONOR and rightful place in recorded history. WE ARE AMERICANS ALL.

AMERICAN GI FORUM OF THE UNITED STATES

RESOLUTION- PBS/Ken Burns Documentary, THE WAR

WHEREAS, The American GI Forum of the United States, is the only Congressionally Chartered Hispanic/Latino Veterans Organization in the United States its primarily purpose is to serve Hispanic/Latino Veterans and their families;

WHEREAS, The American GI Forum was founded by Dr. Hector P. Garcia in 1948 because of the inequities and discrimination inflicted upon returning Mexican-American Veterans after their distinguished service in World War II;

WHEREAS, Hispanic/Latino individuals, as members of the Armed Forces of the United States, served with valor and distinction during World War II;

WHEREAS, In World War II, Hispanic/Latino individuals fought and died for the principles of equality, justice and freedom for **all**.

WHEREAS, Hispanic/Latino individuals during World War II were the most decorated minority group to receive this County's highest award, "The Congressional Medal of Honor";

WHEREAS, Hispanic/Latino Americans, as an ethnic group, made tremendous and significant contributions during World War II, for example:

. . . In 1940, while America was still at peace, two National Guard units from New Mexico, the 200th and 515th Coast Artillery (Anti-aircraft) battalions were activated and dispatched to the Philippine Islands. Largely made up of [Mexican Americans]-- both officers and enlisted men from New Mexico, Arizona, and Texas -- the two units were stationed at Clark Field, 65 miles from Manila.

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese Imperial Navy launched a surprise attack on the American naval fleet at Pearl Harbor, forcing America into war. Within days, Japanese forces attacked the American positions in the Philippines. Outnumbered and desperate, General Douglas MacArthur moved his forces, including the 200th and 515th, to the Bataan Peninsula west of Manila. Here, fighting alongside their Filipino comrades, they made a heroic three-month stand against the large, well-equipped invading forces. As the weeks passed, rations, medical supplies, and ammunition diminished and became scarce. On April 9, 1942, starving and greatly outnumbered, most of the surviving troops were ordered to surrender. After their capture, the American and Filipino soldiers had to endure the 12-day, 85-mile "Death March" from Bataan to the prison camps, followed by 34 months of captivity. Three years later, General Jonathan Wainwright praised the men of the 200th and 515th units, saying that "they were the first to fire and the last to lay down their arms and only reluctantly doing so after being given a direct order."

In the Pacific theater, the 158th Regimental Combat Team, known as the Bushmasters, an Arizona National Guard unit comprised of many Hispanic soldiers, saw heavy combat. They earned the respect of General MacArthur who referred to them as "the greatest fighting combat team ever deployed for battle." Company E of the 141st Regiment of the 36th Texas Infantry Division was made up entirely of [Hispanic] Americans, the majority of them from Texas. After 361 days of combat in Italy and France, the 141st Infantry Regiment sustained 1,126 killed, 5,000 wounded, and over 500 missing in action. In recognition of their extended service and valor, the members of the 141st garnered 31 Distinguished Service Crosses, 12 Legion of Merits, 492 Silver Stars, 11 Soldier's Medals, 1,685 Bronze Stars, as well as numerous commendations and decorations. In all, twelve Hispanic soldiers received the Medal of Honor for their services during World War II.

From 1940 to 1946, more than 65,000 Puerto Ricans served in the American military, most of them going overseas. The 295th and 296th Infantry Regiments of the Puerto Rican National Guard participated in the Pacific theater, while other Puerto Rican soldiers served in Europe.

(Excerpts from: Houston Institute for Culture, *The Hispanic Experience, Hispanics in Military Service, Hispanic Contributions to America's Defense*, by John Schmal. - Originally published by the Puerto Rico Herald, November 11, 1999.);

WHEREAS, The PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) has announced it is airing in September, 2007, the new Ken Burns documentary series, *THE WAR*. This seven-part, 14 hour, documentary series, is directed and produced by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick. It explores the history and horror of World War II from an American perspective. It follows the fortunes of so-called ordinary men and women who get caught up in the greatest cataclysm in human history;

WHEREAS, This documentary exposes the racism of World War II directed at African-American and Japanese-Americans, however, it fails to outline the same as it affected Hispanic/Latino Americans;

WHEREAS, This documentary purports to honor the heroism of all Americans, when in fact, it glaringly fails to honor those heroic Hispanic Americans who have earned such an honor;

WHEREAS, Whether intentionally or inadvertently, the contributions of Hispanic/Latinos in World War II were omitted;

WHEREAS, This oversight appears to have violated PBS's own policy on "Diversity" i.e.,

. . . Content diversity furthers the goals of a democratic society by enhancing public access to the full range of ideas, information, subject matter, and perspectives required to make informed judgments about the issues of our time. It also furthers public television's special mandate to serve many different and discrete audiences. The goal of diversity also requires continuing efforts to **assure that PBS content fully reflects the pluralism of our society, including, for example, appropriate representation of women and minorities. . . .**

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED,

1. That the American GI Forum of the United States condemns this documentary as not presenting the of contributions of Hispanic Americans during World War II and until such time as Hispanics are fairly and adequately represented, demands that it not be aired,
2. That the American GI Forum of the United States requests that the Public Broadcast System forthwith correct this omission.
3. That failure to correct this omission will result in the institution of a nationwide boycott of PBS and its affiliates. Further, we would lead an effort requesting that all public and private funding be curtailed.

For it was Abraham Lincoln who said, "History is not history unless it's true."

Adopted on the 13th day of March, 2007

**By the American GI Forum of the United States
National Board of Directors Meeting in Las Vegas, NV**

ANTONIO GIL MORALES,
National Commander & Board Chairman