

WIF Grantee Brings Faces of Charlotte Together With New Exhibit

By Carolyn Meade

How many parts of your life would you say have changed by 111% in the last 10 years?

For most of us, if even one thing grew or shifted by that much, it would represent a life-changing, personality-defining event.

Yet that is the story for North Carolina and most of the Southeastern United States in terms of demographics. The Latino population of North Carolina grew by 111% between 2000 and 2010. For South Carolina, the percentage was 148%. The 2012 purchasing power of North Carolina's Latinos totaled \$14.0 billion, up 1,571% since 1990. Most Latinos are native-born Americans, and nearly three in four Latinos (74%) are U.S. citizens.

Levine Museum of the New South is celebrating – and increasing the understanding of – the Southeast's growing Latino population with a new exhibit, called ¡NUEVOlution! It's bilingual, interactive and challenges visitors to consider what they know about the community they live in and what it means to be Latino in the New South.



It was made possible, in part, by a 2012 WIF grant of \$90,000, which supported the hiring of the museum's first bilingual, bi-cultural coordinator, Melina Monita-Pacheco.

"Melina was that one thing...that one thing you can do that makes everything else unnecessary or easier," said Levine Museum's newly retired Executive Director Emily Zimmern. "She enabled us to leverage our participation in the Innovation Lab for Museums (the national program which led to ¡NUEVOlution!), and she deepened and strengthened our relationships in the community and enabled us to receive feedback from non-English speakers."

Levine Museum started this journey with its 2009-2010 exhibit, "CHANGING PLACES: From Black & White to Technicolor," but it knew it had not reached the Charlotte Latino community in doing so. The Latino New South Coordinator position made the difference, she said, and has continued following expiration of the two-year grant from the Women's Impact Fund. It is now filled by Oliver Merino.

¡NUEVOlution! tells a complex, nuanced story and breaks all rules of museum exhibits in doing so. It underscores, says Zimmern, that in the Southeast, “transformative change is everywhere and overwhelming.”

A partnership with the Atlanta History Center and the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, ¡NUEVOlution! garnered national attention even before it opened. MIT’s Civic Media Conference highlighted the Museum’s programming in this area as a national example of the role a museum can play in immigrant integration. The Aspen Institute will bring journalists to Charlotte in November to use Charlotte as a case study for transformative change in the New South.

¡NUEVOlution! will be in Charlotte through October 2016 before traveling to Birmingham and then to Atlanta. The museum has planned a year of programming and dialogue opportunities; it will play host to corporate affinity groups and to numerous Latino organizations and celebrations.

WIF members, don’t miss it.