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## Las Vegas SUN

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# New voice calls on Hispanics

**TV news director seeks to make connection on how events affect community**

**By Timothy Pratt** <[timothy@lasvegassun.com](mailto:timothy@lasvegassun.com)>

Las Vegas Sun

The potential effect of Adriana Arevalo's Las Vegas arrival may have been foreshadowed by just a few words.

Late in the day Monday, the start of Arevalo's second week as news director for KINC Channel 15, the local Univision affiliate, a promotional spot for a segment on the 6 p.m. news finished with a voice intoning, "We'll tell you what this means to you."

The phrase was Arevalo's, and was as good a sign as any of what her arrival may mean to the fast-growing Hispanic population, now an estimated 25 percent of the valley's 1.8 million residents.

"People sit down at 6 every night to feel some kind of connection, to find out how things affect them - (like) why do prices go up, why it's important to vote, who the candidates are," Arevalo says. A charm bracelet dangling portraits of saints rattles on her right wrist, her hands as active as her thoughts.

The newswoman, who has reported on guerrillas in Colombia and the aftermath of 9/11 in New York City, wants to use her experience as a Latina, a journalist and an immigrant to better integrate the Hispanic community into the Las Vegas Valley.

The Hispanic community in the valley is mostly Mexican, and mainly working class, with little formal education. It is an audience, Arevalo says, that is "screaming for information."

If you put three things together - Univision's knockout ratings, Spanish-language media's role in the Hispanic community and Arevalo's experience and ambitions - results could range from pumped-up Hispanic participation at the polls to a drop in the high numbers of scams committed against immigrants.

Hispanic viewers tend to place a high level of trust in television news, and Arevalo wants to build on that by providing more advocacy.

She allows that "there are things the news can't teach - such as reading and writing." But then she rattles off a list of things she wants to share with the valley's Hispanics: "to ask for the licenses of workers, to read contracts, to obtain interpreters or translators, to find out about school buses, to register to vote !"

Her news program also will give more time to candidates in November's midterm elections than in previous years, she says: "We want to ask candidates, 'What are you doing for Hispanics?' "

And she wants to build on a recent effort by the station to register more Hispanic voters. Arevalo says many complain that politicians don't take the Hispanic community into account, but then asks, "If we don't vote, how are they going to take us into account?"

She also wants to tackle such issues as fraud committed in the Hispanic community, domestic violence and high school dropout rates.

Those plans fit right in with the dual role experts assign to Spanish-language news programs, which they say get more directly involved with viewers than their English-language counterparts.

"First, they help Latinos maintain cultural ties," says Federico Subervi, a professor at Texas State University and director of the Latinos and Media project. "At the same time, (the news) helps Latinos get incorporated politically and economically into the society in which they live and to get ready for the American dream - which is why they're here."

Chris Roman, general manager of Entravision Communications Corp., KINC's parent company, says his news program's ratings bring with them a certain responsibility.

Recent Nielsen figures show that Univision's local 6 p.m. news averaged 33,000 viewers, 55 percent of whom were between ages 18 and 34, he says. In comparison, KVBC Channel 3, the NBC affiliate and the valley's leading news station, has averaged 68,000 viewers at that time, but only 4 percent are in the industry's sought-after young adult category. Additionally, Univision's news is seen by 25 percent of Hispanic households watching TV at 6 p.m.

Roman's view of the relationship between Univision's news program and its audience is demonstrated by his participation in the station's recent voter-registration push. Following several weeks of promoting registration during the news broadcast, he and staff members hit local Hispanic supermarkets to sign people up.

The station sent in a little more than half of the 1,500 registration forms it obtained from the Clark County Election Department, Roman says, and gave out most of the rest.

It's what Subervi calls "the power of advocacy mobilization."

For those who can't vote - the valley's estimated 75,000 to 150,000 undocumented immigrants - Arevalo wants to provide them accurate and up-to-date information about immigration laws.

Fernando del Rincon worked with Arevalo during her four years at "Primer Impacto," Univision's Miami-produced, top-rated newsmagazine, with 1.3 million U.S. viewers.

He said Arevalo's personal and professional background prepares her well for the challenge of getting the news to one of the fastest-growing communities in one of the fastest-growing urban areas in the nation.

That background includes becoming the first woman on RCN's investigative reporting team shortly after graduating college in Bogota, Colombia. Unfortunately, investigative reporting is not exactly rewarded in Colombia, and a 1999 report on American environmentalists who guerrillas had kidnapped and assassinated brought death threats.

A short time later, she became part of RCN's U.S. team, which led her to spend several weeks in New York, reporting on the aftermath of the Sept. 11 attacks.

Arevalo recalls reporting at scenes early in her career where "you could smell burning flesh" after bomb attacks.

Del Rincon says that "understanding the tragedy of a country like Colombia" leaves her equipped to "get inside the heads" of her viewers.

He adds that her work in Colombia and Miami - both for RCN and "Primer Impacto" - allows Arevalo to move from what he called "a macro perspective (to the) micro level" of leading a local news program.

She understands the sociopolitical influence of the news, and she is an immigrant who lived the same thing as her

viewers, he says.

Subervi, the academic, says if Univision's news program is successful in its goals, the result could be "a more participating, involved (community)---instead of an alienated community that feels ignored."

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