

Not to mention the fact that Latino characters are usually depicted as being in this country illegally. There are plenty of people out there who already view Latinos as hailing from "Cucaracha" without having their beliefs reinforced by the almighty television. If you think we Latinos have made amazing progress and have many Latino actors on television and in movies that aren't portrayed negatively, how about watching the ALMA awards? It pains me to see the association grasping at straws to have a category in which there are more than two actors and to see how, in most cases, the nominees for awards are supporting actors. Characters not unlike Rosario.

But, when I see shows like *Will and Grace*, I wonder where the outrage is? Maybe the right people weren't watching that particular episode and so there was no uproar about it (unlike the whole Taco Bell Chihuahua controversy), but I think there's also something to be said about the fact that people tend to forget that groups other than African-Americans are discriminated against in this country and are often portrayed as racist stereotypes by the media. If the maid had been African-American and "Karen" had made a similarly insulting comment, all hell probably would have broken loose. However, NBC wouldn't have had the balls to even allow such a comment against a black character to air, because it is widely acknowledged that this country has treated black people terribly. And, perhaps more importantly, there are a lot of black activists and groups who would protest. Whatever the reason, it definitely seems to be more acceptable to make fun of certain groups than others.

What's more, pulling this tired and deceptive green card story line is ignorant and misleading. They assume (a) that it's easy to become a legal immigrant in such a manner and (b) that illegal immigrants are gaining residency left and right by marrying for green cards. I think it's fucked up that NBC can get away with letting something so insulting and demeaning to Latinos air, but, frankly, I'm not surprised. I'd seen that story line way too many

times already in now-defunct shows like *Jesse and Beverly Hills 90210*. It's always portrayed as quick, easy, funny, and oh so romantic. Oh look at this wonderful American marrying this poor wet-back just so she can stay in the country. How sweet. Yeah, well it isn't.

The rules governing the attainment of residency by non-citizens married to U.S. citizens are not necessarily clear and not necessarily easy to follow. According to U.S. law, marriages between a citizen and non-citizen must be entered into in "good faith." Then, just before a couple's two year anniversary, they must undergo an interview with an immigration officer, who attempts to make sure their union isn't a sham. The "investigation" includes weird, personal questions like: what side of the bed does your mate sleeps on? Or, What kind of underwear do they wear? During this two-year period the marriage cannot be annulled or terminated unless the spouse dies. And no, permanent resident status isn't automatically granted after two years. A petition has to be entered in order to terminate immigrant status. If it isn't filed then the person can be sent back to their country of origin, unless there's a really good reason for not having filed the petition.

AMERICAN LATINO MEDIA ARTS (ALMA) AWARDS

The ALMA awards were created in 1995 as part of an effort among advocacy groups to promote fair, accurate, and balanced portrayals of Latinos in television, film, and music. Born as a direct response to negative stereotyping of Latinos in entertainment, these awards honor Latino performers for their outstanding artistic achievement and for enhancing the image of Latinos. The name ALMA, which is Spanish for "spirit" or "soul," is intended to represent the determined spirit of the Latino people, as well as, the scope of the awards program.

THE TACO BELL CHIHUAHUA CONTROVERSY

In 1998 the fast-food company Taco Bell ran a series of advertisements featuring a talking chihuahua that spoke with a pronounced Spanish accent. Despite the ad campaign's apparent commercial success, many people condemned the ads as insulting to Latino people. One critic of the ads was Gabriel Cazares, the mayor of Clearwater, Florida, who was also a former president of the Tampa, Florida, chapter of the League for United Latin American Citizens. Cazares told an interviewer,

I think it was an unfortunate commercial. I think that the use of a dog to depict Mexicans was very demeaning. If Taco Bell wanted to depict someone that would reflect Mexican culture we have many live, two-legged artists, singers, dancers, musicians—some great people in America that could have been selected to give a testimonial for Taco Bell (and) say, 'Yo quiero un taco.' And that wouldn't have been offensive.