

# Deceptive Pitch

*Bush tailors his ads, but not his policies, to Hispanic voters*

In his bid for the presidency, Gov. George W. Bush has made no secret about his interest in the Hispanic vote, even though he has yet to develop a clear-cut message for Hispanics and has missed important opportunities to bond with the community. But if recent history is any guide, the well-funded Bush campaign already is in the kitchen cooking up an advertising strategy that will persuade Hispanic voters to fall in love with the concept of a second Bush presidency. Let me describe the recipe.



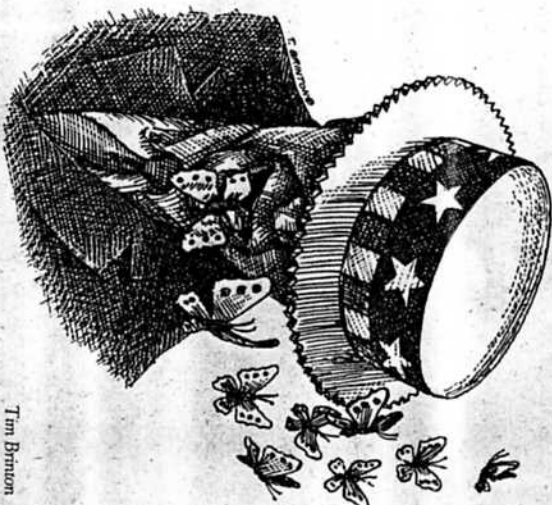
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In his quest for the governorship, Mr. Bush recognized the importance of garnering the Hispanic vote in a state where Hispanics made up 31 percent of the population. But how would Hispanics, who traditionally voted the Democratic ticket, be persuaded to vote for a Republican? The answer was found in Lionel Sosa, a recognized expert in Hispanic advertising, who was instrumental in persuading about a third of Hispanic voters to vote for Mr. Bush. The election outcome was historically significant and interpreted as evidence of Mr. Bush's potential among Hispanic voters.

Mr. Sosa recently explained the formula for his advertising success, a technique that he had perfected over several Republican campaigns: "We never sell the party. Because to the Hispanic community, that is tantamount to going to hell."

Instead, the ads for Mr. Bush focused on family, hard work, sacrifice, faith in God and strong moral values — all subjects with which Hispanic voters readily could identify. A smiling governor usually popped up at the end of each 30-second commercial to reinforce the association. Add a little Spanish to season the recipe, and — presto! — Hispanic voters were seduced into thinking Mr. Bush was the perfect choice.

Thus, the experts packaged Mr. Bush to appeal to Hispanic voters while carefully avoiding references to the issues represented by him or the Republican Party. But how might Hispanics have



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voted if they had known more about Mr. Bush's positions on key issues that affected the quality of their lives?

For example, Hispanics might have reconsidered their support for Mr. Bush if they had known that the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund was suing the state of Texas for its reckless use of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills in public schools. MALDEF alleges that the TAAAS is discriminatory and directly responsible for dramatically increasing the Hispanic dropout rate in Texas public schools. Such tests have been described by congressionally mandated studies as harmful to Hispanic children and ineffective tools for improving educational outcomes. Despite such evidence, Mr. Bush continues to push for expanded use of the TAAAS.

Hispanics also might have reconsidered their support for Mr. Bush if they had known that he recently signed legislation barring cities in Texas

from suing gun makers for the costs of violence. Mr. Bush's curious support for gun manufacturers seems to ignore recent evidence about the economic costs and significant injuries caused by firearms. A study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* concluded that the cost of treating gunshot wounds in 1994 was \$2.3 billion, half of which was paid by taxpayers. Why should Hispanics care about that? Because many of the gunshot victims are poor Hispanics who live in neighborhoods that frequently are targets of violence.

Finally, Hispanics just might have reconsidered their support for Mr. Bush if they had known that he opposed legislation that would have increased the penalties related to hate crimes, such as the recent dragging death of an African-American man in Jasper. Mr. Bush appears clueless about the latest FBI report on hate crimes, which documents 326 hate crimes in Texas and 698 Hispanic victims of hate crimes in the United States in 1995. Of the nearly 8,000 reported hate crimes in the United States that year, 71 percent were motivated by racial, ethnic or national origin bias.

With a campaign war chest of more than \$50 million, Mr. Bush can afford to ignore those important issues because the right advertising expertise always is available to feed Hispanics the image of a hard-working, God-fearing, family man who speaks Spanish. Hispanic voters, on the other hand, can't afford the luxury of allowing a slick advertising campaign to influence their judgment of a candidate with such a dismal record on issues that so clearly impact the lives of Hispanics. I hope Hispanic voters will wake up before Election Day and realize that Mr. Bush isn't the friend he pretends to be to Hispanics but, rather, just an advertising concept with potentially harmful effects.

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