

¡PULSO PULSE!

The Beat Of A Latino In The Entertainment Industry.

By Marco Antonio Rodriguez (Latino Leaders Columnist)

PULL BACK! THE POWER OF CHALUPAS COMPELS YOU!

Do we, as Latinos, simply have too much personality for television and film cameras?

At a recent audition for a Spanish fast food chain commercial I was told by the casting director to be natural: “Feel the chalupa.” “Make love to it.” “React the way you would if, let’s say, your family just won the lottery.” “How about you BE your family.” After the first take, the casting director stops camera: “Too big!” “Too much hand waving!” “Too loud!” Si, señorita gringa casting director pero es ‘cause you said natural. If my family just won the lottery I would scream like a hyper ten year-old meeting Justin Bieber’s deported monkey. My tío Lencho would repeatedly throw himself against a wall. My mami would fall to her knees, beat her chest like a drum and sing praises to every santo in the alphabet. Surely my fellow Latinos will identify with this authentic, Chalupa reaction! Must I dilute our natural Latino tendencies for the sake of a commercial that will air in its intended Latin markets, anyway?

Mainstream television and film (for the purposes of this commentary, we won’t even delve into telenovelas. A baffling beast in its own accord.) is a visual medium. These are systems for transmitting visual images and sound that are reproduced onto a screen. When we are told to be our authentic selves as Latinos, it is for that modern marvel called a camera. A more refined, pulled back version is in order. Certainly not the version at Tloc Tloc’s quinceañera after one too many spiked horchatas. And certainly not the one watching the latest telenovela about the frumpy maid falling in love with the rich (and always blond) magnate who turns out to be her abusive (and dead) ex-husband that has possessed his body. This is subtle Latino. Less Sofia Vergara on Modern Family! More Sofia Vergara in those Pepsi commercials!

In film and television we, as actors, are constantly asked to play the truth of the moment. Bring YOU to the scene. Your authentic self is more interesting than a manufactured copy. What if this is my authentic self? As Latinos we are a very demonstrative culture. Can’t that gringo camera handle my shake your bon bon Latinoisms? On one occasion I remember being told by a casting director that I looked like a drunk bobble head doll. In person my movements were fine, but on film the camera magnified them. Too much Latino... is there such a thing?

Through practice and plenty of trial and error I learned that some of my natural, “Latino” movements were too much on tape. Think it. Don’t show it. If you think it, they will see. This is not to say we must now speed dial MECHA and declare yet another oppression for the struggles of our peoples! For those of us in entertainment, we must understand the technicalities of what it means to work in front of a camera. Learn how to position those sexy, voluptuous pansas. Those thick and defined josicos, so the best parts are seen in the right, subtle way and at the most important times. In order to be in the game, indeed we must learn how to embrace our true selves and yet play it all at the same time.

Of course, there’s always telenovelas. If my struggles continue perhaps I have a career waiting as William Levy ‘s sidekick. *Gone With The Chalupas*: A tale of revenge and incendiary, gastric passions. I play Filiberto Antonio De La Cruz Montevideo Schultz who, along with his Chihuahua “La Whisper”(really the spirit of his dead ex-wife’s lesbian lover), is working to take over Levy’s empire of baby oil! Hmm... Or perhaps it’s time to follow the advice of all the greats who consistently work: go back and take ongoing refresher acting classes for television and film acting. I’ll show you how my tío Lencho makes love to a Chalupa! I’ll show you how he would throw himself against a wall after winning the lottery! I’ll show you... No, wait. I won’t show it. I’ll think it. Then I’ll book it. And that’s the name of the game.