

Filmmaker says he will re-edit documentary, include Latinos

by John Wilkens

Faced with escalating criticism that his upcoming national television documentary on World War II excludes Latinos, Ken Burns announced Thursday he will re-edit the film.

Ken Burns, documentary filmmaker Hispanic activists greeted the news with cautious optimism. "We'll have to wait and see, but it appears that justice is finally being done," said Gus Chavez, a retired San Diego State University administrator and longtime local activist.

Chavez helped spearhead a campaign to pressure Burns and PBS not to air the series until changes were made.

Last month, in an attempt to quell the controversy, Burns agreed to film additional segments featuring Latinos. They were to be shown during breaks of "The War," scheduled to air in seven parts on PBS beginning Sept. 23.

But after initially welcoming the offer, Chavez and other members of the "Defend the Honor" campaign argued that incorporating the new material into the actual documentary would be the only way to correct what they called a "shameful" oversight. They've been pressuring PBS sponsors and threatening boycotts.

A day after meeting in New York with members of Latino advocacy groups, Burns said in a written statement: "The role of Hispanic-American veterans in WWII is one that lends itself to the universality of this film and merits being included in my film. It is adding another layer of storytelling that will only enrich what we already have."

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