

Samuel Rodriguez: Hispanics Are Here to Stay

Latino evangelical Christians are creating waves of local, national and global change. As their influence grows, there will be a Latin flavor within government and business, entertainment, politics and the church. America—and the world—will experience what Rodriguez and Crosby call the “salsafication” of culture, and it will be (and is) emanating first from within America’s Hispanic churches.

“Our influence is growing, not declining. We’re too big to be ignored and too loud to be missed,” said Rev. Rodriguez, who this year became the first Hispanic evangelical ever to pray at a presidential inauguration in the United States. “Politics, culture, business, entertainment—you name it—they’ll either bring our community to the table or we’ll be running the table for them. Either way, we’re here to stay.”

“Having pastored multiethnic church communities in New York, Boston and Tampa, I believe there are ideas and constructs held by the wider Christian community about the Latino church that are potentially harmful and often misinformed,” said Dr. Robert Crosby. “Now is the time for all Christians to embrace, celebrate and learn from what is happening in this surging faith community and to allow this powerful fire to spread. This book presents compelling evidence that what’s happening within the Latino church experience has the potential to define, accelerate and energize the global Christian community throughout the 21st century.”

According to Rodriguez and Crosby, the tipping point is here.

Consider these facts:

- Latino evangelicals are the fastest-growing religious group in the United States.

- Latinos are turning not just to Protestantism but to its activist evangelical strain—more than 35 percent of Hispanics in America call themselves born-again.
- The massive Christian population in Latin America is becoming more Pentecostal or charismatic.

This spiritual change is coinciding with a demographic shift that elevates the importance and impact of Hispanic views on critical issues such as immigration, race relations, the sanctity of human life, religious freedom and justice.

“As the fastest growing minority group in the United States, much has been said and written about the socioeconomic and political impact of Hispanics,” said Rev. Rodriguez. “What’s missing in this analysis, is what’s happening within the Latino church. It’s a movement marked by passionate worship, and it’s catching fire around the world. This book explores the critical lessons we can all glean from this phenomenon and it’s also a celebration of the power of Christ, the move of the Holy Spirit and the beautiful diversity of the kingdom of God.”

In *When Faith Catches Fire*, Rodriguez and Crosby unpack the reasons for the growing Latino influence on the church and culture, noting the phenomenon is more of a spiritual awakening than a social trend. This awakening is leading to what the authors see as a more passionate, spirit-filled faith sweeping throughout North and South America. Along with it comes changes in forms of worship, an emphasis on diversity and a growing concern to incorporate compassion into evangelism.

“We embrace the message of Billy Graham and the march of Martin Luther King, Jr.,” says Rev. Rodriguez. “These insights have the power to bring multiethnic and multigenerational renewal and restoration to Christians everywhere. My prayer is that this book would serve as a prophetic clarion call that both urges and empowers the church to step into its fullness

in Christ, and helps our culture understand how our faith influences everything that we do and everything we believe as Latino Christians.” {eoa}