

TOURISM AD DRAWS FLAK FOR SEEKING 'LIGHT-SKINNED' HISPANICS



New Mexico's new tourism ad, hasn't even been shot, but it's already attracted a lot of censure. It seems that a casting call was made for "light-skinned Hispanics" to star in it. This really ruffled feathers and The Santa Fe New Mexican in an editorial Friday called the "light-skinned" requirement "wrong-headed." The people were already upset with the producers for hiring a Texan firm to shoot rather than put their faith in a local firm and get someone from the New Mexico's film industry to shoot the film. The Santa Fe New Mexican in its editorial said, "Hearing that term brings to mind a vision of casting agents holding up paper bags next to people's faces to ensure they can pass. We don't know, of course, who made it into the shoot and how New Mexico will be presented to the world once the campaign is unveiled. But really, light-skinned only? What were they thinking?" The tourism Secretary Monique Jacobson, said that the ad is part of a \$2 million project, to attract out-of-state visitors to the state. In a response to the "fair-skin" controversy, Jacobson said that "The casting call was written by a casting agency looking for people to play the role of a "tourist" in our ads. It is unfortunate that the exact wording has caused a distraction from our intention which is to showcase and feature all of the adventures that one could have in New Mexico, not the background of the people having them." Tom Hollerbach, the managing director and COO of the advertising company that is doing the ad has clarified saying, "The focus of our shoot was on showcasing to the country the many amazing experiences and adventures one can have in New Mexico. The casting call you referenced was for the role of "tourists" who could be coming from any number of states. This is the first of many spots which will feature the wide range of people who are drawn to New Mexico." For long, there has been a known preference of lighter skinned Latinos, in films, in television and in the print media. The glaring bias has come into the open, with the ad specifically stating sthat, Under "family," it wants a mom and a dad, 35-40 years old, fit and attractive, with brown or black hair. The children, one of each sex, should be cute everyday kids between 8 and 14. "A little bit of grey hair is nice but not critical," is how the ad describes the ideal male needed, and in the end, very clearly, "Caucasian or light skinned Hispanics." However unpalatable, the ad has lifted the lid on a painful truth that is endemic to American Advertising. It is indeed ironical that a 'color code' prevents Hispanics from playing themselves. Update: An update we received from the New Mexico Tourism Department reveals that this is only one of many spots it will produce featuring many different people enjoying themselves in New Mexico. Also, in a move away from the industry standard, it will omit any ethnic descriptors in its future casting calls.