

Speech**Engaging Aging Migrant and Diverse Populations****How AARP does it in the United States****Gabriela Zabalúa-Goddard****CONTEXT:**

It's an honor to speak at this cross European conference exploring how societies can better serve older ethnic minority consumers, volunteers and workers. And I thank the Ministry of Intergenerational Affairs of North Rhine Westphalia, Germany, for extending to me this opportunity. Speaking on behalf of AARP, we're proud to be featured as an international organization that excels at engaging older persons of diverse ethnicities (particularly the Hispanic population) and encouraging their full participation in society. Exploring strategies for better integrating older migrant populations in society is particularly important considering our looming labor shortages.

Good morning. I am honored to be here. Thank you for the opportunity to present on behalf of AARP.

AARP is a non-governmental, non-partisan association with 40 million members who are 50 and older. We believe that, as people age, they should retain independence, choice and control in their lives. We feel this is beneficial not only for individuals, but for society as a whole.

Internationally, AARP aims to help people live longer, healthier, more financially secure and productive lives by identifying best ideas and practices on key policy issues. We act as a partner and as a catalyst to governments and decisions makers in all sectors to help address and shape the social and economic implications of aging worldwide.

Slide 2

This is a special year for AARP, as we celebrate our 50th anniversary. We're finally old enough to join ourselves!

But for those who've never met us, let me share a story that *truly* gets to the soul of who we are today as an organization.

About 60 years ago, our founder Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus, who was a retired high school principal from California, went to look up a distinguished, also retired, Spanish teacher colleague. Dr. Andrus went to the address she had been given and knocked on the door. Someone answered, and explained that the distinguished Spanish teacher lived “out back”...in the old chicken coop. In the coop, is where she found her friend, without money, without health insurance, with her dignity shattered. And Dr. Andrus got mad, but she also *got organized*. With other like-minded educators, some active, some retired, she began a campaign to get well- priced medical insurance for retired teachers. Eight years and 42 turndowns later, she was offering the first ever group health insurance coverage to retired teachers throughout the nation. She would soon realize that many other older Americans needed help as well, so in 1958 she founded AARP. She did this in her seventies. [There is a powerful message here about the value of the experience of older workers, but also about the kinds of issues that would motivate a retired person to

come out of retirement and engage in an entrepreneurial endeavor for the good of society].

But Dr. Andrus saw AARP as doing much more than offering health insurance for older people who needed it. She believed that the retirement years should a time for new opportunities and involvement with society - not as a time for withdrawal from life, rather a time to remain engaged and completely committed to living our second youth, if possible, even better than our first.

Her vision was that aging Americans could maintain their personal dignity and continue their social usefulness by recognizing their own individual worth through a commitment to service. And, she saw AARP as an army of useful citizens who had the ability, the experience and the desire to promote and enhance the public good.

Slide 3

She gave us the motto that still guides AARP today:

“To serve, not to be served.”

I don't know if Dr. Andrus and her small band of social entrepreneurs ever imagined what her fledgling organization would become, but I do know she would be very proud.

Slide 4

Her vision continues in the work we do today, enhancing the quality of life for all as we age, leading positive social change, and delivering value to our members through information, advocacy, and service

Among our 40 million members, 2.3 million are African-American, and 1.6 million are Hispanic. One-third of our members are between the ages of 50 and 60, one-third are between 60 and 70, and one-third 70 plus. Half of them work, and half are already retired.

Slide 5

So, how does AARP engage, and champion the future of so many people? How do we address so many needs? What

about the migrant and culturally diverse communities within our membership?

We do so by FOCUSING on five core needs everyone shares

- 1. the need for health care**
- 2. financial security**
- 3. the need to feel connected to family and community**
- 4. the need to give something back to society**
- 5. and the need to simply enjoy life**

These are common needs to all, regardless of age, gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, or physical ability. And they define AARP's social impact and advocacy agendas, framing them around active ageing; lifelong learning; and the fight against age discrimination.

These five core needs are the backbone of the editorial content of our magazines, (show slides with magazines) our websites (show slide of websites), our messaging (show Divided we Fail), and our branding (show an ad).

And we stay in touch with our members in a multimedia, and multi-platform fashion, we find them where they are: through print, television, radio, and branding and advertising campaigns.

We consistently poll and survey our members to make sure we are getting it right. We survey our members on national issues, and without taking a partisan position, we report on these findings in a journalistically balanced fashion, garnering massive media attention that in turn raises awareness of aging issues and of AARP.

We are watchdogs of industries and service providers who want to do business with this large segment of society. We provide legal counsel to low-income seniors, financial education tools and products, assistance with tax preparation, and much more.

In summary, AARP adds value to our members' lives, by ENHANCING the quality of their lives, so they can become active members of society, and engage responsibly in their own aging process.

Slide 6

7 years ago, AARP stepped up it's efforts to reach out to the largest and fastest growing migrant group in the US, the Hispanic community.

As a membership organization, it is our obligation and responsibility to ensure that we represent the true profile of society we want to serve. There are 7.5 million Hispanics ages 50 and over living in the US. All from different cultural backgrounds and levels of acculturation. By 2040, one in every four people living in the US will be Hispanic, and the census bureau is saying that there will no longer be minority or majority groups in our country.

So, we really needed to step our efforts up and to ENGAGE the Hispanic population...we had to LEARN FROM them, about them.

For a number of years, Hispanics in the United States were viewed as a group with common experiences from which

certain patterns could be predicted. As numbers grew, sociologists, politicians, marketing experts, and the media took a closer look. They soon discovered that Hispanics are less than monolithic in background, culture, and political beliefs.

As a Hispanic living in the United States myself, and as the editor in chief of all content produced for our Hispanic members, including a magazine, a website, a radio show, and a TV show, I quickly learned the importance of developing content and messaging that informs and engages our Hispanic membership, beyond those 5 core needs we discussed earlier. I learned to recognize what issues bind Hispanic elders and their loved ones.

I have to keep consistently aware that the push, the desire, the need to become acculturated is constantly challenged by an even greater and emotional pull to remain rooted in the traditions that we bring with us.

AARP has to keep in mind that our content, the messaging, the products, and the services we develop to engage our Hispanic members need to be the BRIDGE between these two

worlds Hispanics live in, to ensure we are bringing a full 360 degree culturally appropriate member experience to this population.

EXAMPLE:

Let me give you an example of what I am talking about when I refer to the push and the pull of culture and acculturation:

I grew up in Argentina, my grandparents were integral to our lives: they helped raise my sisters and me—passing along family traditions, teaching us social skills and cultural history, sharing life lessons. They participated in the everyday tasks of childrearing—picking us up at school, taking us to music lessons, and the list goes on. I truly cannot conceive of my childhood without them. As they grew older, we molded *our* daily lives to *their* changing needs. When those needs became more than the immediate family could handle, we looked for help from the extended family—a cultural tradition that worked well...

But that was there and then.

For Hispanic migrants to the United States, fulfilling these family obligations, these traditions we bring from our countries, the intergenerational care giving, if you will, has become increasingly difficult. The following scenario, is repeated all too often. True to tradition, many Hispanic families in the United States attempt to provide a full range of caregiving services to their elderly relatives. The primary caregiver is typically an adult daughter who, more than half the time, is also caring for a child 18 or younger. The stress of multiple responsibilities can become overwhelming. Not wanting to be seen as disrespectful or ungrateful, she doesn't complain. Instead, she keeps a tight lid on her emotions, continues to take care of everyone in the family except herself, while her own health deteriorates from stress. Sometimes, the frustration can escalate to elder abuse—rarely seen in the past among Hispanics. So, as you can imagine, written information about caregiving options coming from AARP would not be enough to help this care giver, we also need to provide her with very much needed respite so she can take care of herself first, and take time to evaluate the options.

AARP saw this as an opportunity to meet a societal challenge and relying on our volunteers as our main resource, we created the AARP Respite Service for Caregivers, tailored to the Hispanic community. The service provides not only very much needed relief to the caregiver, but also engagement opportunities for the trained volunteers providing the service. In some cases these volunteers are retired individuals, seeking to remain active and contribute to positive social change.

SLIDE 7

We take it a step further and through our online community channel dedicated to Caregiving, we highlight many other ways in which anyone can get behind this issue and serve. (Direct attention to slide) This is just ONE example of the importance of the issues affecting the migrant elders, in depth.

We study our Hispanic members to serve them better. We found out that for engagement and loyalty to a mission, the

level of expectation among our Hispanic members is higher than that of the general population. We learned that TRUST drives engagement. That messaging needs to include a sense of family and convey a feeling of belonging. But developing these messages in Spanish just doesn't cut it. Hispanics are more intergenerational in the way they live. In a single household you can often find three generations living together. Some members of the family speak only Spanish, most are bilingual, some speak only English, yet, there is great sharing among generations, so the messaging also needs to have an intergenerational focus.

We learned that if we were going to be relevant to the Hispanic community and engage it in active aging, in lifelong learning, in and healthy living, we were going to need to have to touch it.

And we have had success. Once we really focused on getting to know the Hispanic community, we took our magazine readership, for example, from 250,000, to 450,000, to 850,000 to 1.6 million in the past 3 years. Once we figured out that the majority of our elderly Hispanics turned to radio for

information, we went from a radio show audience of 0 to a DAILY radio show audience of 400,000 in just 2 years.

And we continued creating engagement opportunities and volunteering opportunities. The Spanish-language Tax-Aid, through which trained bilingual volunteers assist vulnerable and at risk aging Hispanics in the preparation of their tax returns. The Spanish-language Driver Safety program through which trained volunteers teach older drivers how to compensate for the effects of aging with techniques that will allow them to stay mobile longer and safer. The Grandparent's Information Center, where the many Hispanic grandparents that are finding themselves raising grandkids, especially during this time of war, can find support, information, and resources. The Re-careering Center, where Hispanic retirees who need to supplement their retirement incomes learn new skills from trained bilingual volunteers that then help them match those skills with available jobs.

And just last week, AARP launched the Create the Good campaign. It is a new effort to amplify our deep commitment to helping others. We know that our members want to make a

difference in their communities, but they may not have the schedules to become full-time volunteers. So, Create the Good is about offering our members new, more flexible opportunities to help others. We're just getting started, and we have some plans for this effort, so we are engaging our members and their families in sending us ideas to make it “sing.”

If we are truly going to be able to move from challenge to opportunity, we need to create the transformation vehicles that will take us from here to there.

We need to move all our engagement agendas to an even higher level. At the same time, we need to keep the notion of service top of mind. Become the champions and the advocates of our migrant elders. Find them where they are, and speak to them with relevance and respect, as we show them where to find these opportunities to give back, to become engaged.

There is no longer a place for passive bystanders in the world, a new constellation is within our sight, and it will take

**all of us working together to grab the tail of the comet and
ride to the future.**

Thank you.