

Project to Rescue Memories of Hispanic War Veterans

By JUDITH TORREA

AUSTIN, Texas, - Hollywood and history books forget that not all the heroes in World War II were white and, for this reason, the University of Texas at Austin will rescue the memory of Mexican-Americans who gave their lives defending the United States.

The research project entitled "Latinos in the United States During the Second World War: Changes Seen, Changes Experienced" is the first of its kind that involves organizing a conference, publishing a book and making a documentary.

"I am proud that I fought for my country. I believe my participation in the war and my family are the two most important things I have done in my life," said Cruz Mendez, who fought for the United States during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, where 2,300 U.S. citizens died in 1941.

The Japanese attack is commemorated Dec. 7 as the day that marked the definitive

entry of the United States into World War II.

Mendez, who lives with his wife Maria in the Texas town of Vanhorn (20 miles from Mexico), has in his dining room a picture of a warship from when he fought on the coast of Japan and a framed medal of honor.

"Hispanic men and women that served their country in the Army uniform or as civilians and risked their lives for their country are the ignored heroes who have never been given credit," Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, journalism professor at the University of Texas and director of the project, told EFE.

The shortage of historians, journalists and writers who delve deeply into this subject is one of the challenges of the research project.

"In the 1940s, Hispanics were not considered an important part of our society. Historically, Hispanics have been relegated to a second tier," Rivas-Rodriguez said.

The final goal is to recognize the histori-

cal, social, political and anthropological impact of these Hispanics during and after the Second World War.

"We are seeking the testimony of people who had some relation to the war and have a story to tell," Rivas-Rodriguez said.

"The subject can include how women helped their husbands face those times, how the war was experienced through Hispanic eyes, stories worthy of a novel, and so on," she added.

Interested parties should send four copies of their story to the University of Texas before the second week of January.

The conference will be held May 26 and 27 and is to be the first step toward publishing a book on the narrated experiences. Later, a documentary will be made, produced by Mexican-American Hector Galan.

Out of the 16 million U.S. citizens who took part in the war, approximately 500,000 were Hispanic. In the United States there are 12 million veterans today whose average age is 72, according to University of Texas sources.

News Briefs

Protest Prompt Debate Over Freedom of Expression

By Elena Moreno

Seattle, - The protests here, now in their third day, have prompted debates over the right to freedom of expression, inspired by U.S. President Bill Clinton himself.

Though the U.S. government insists that the protests against the World Trade Organization (WTO) and free trade are wrong, according to Clinton and a State Department spokesman, peaceful protest fits into this country's long-standing tradition of freedom of expression and the framework of a democratic society.

The protests, in which an estimated 40,000 people have participated, turned violent however on the opening day of the ministerial conference, and have led to confrontations with police.

While ministers participating in the conference were debating whether or not to launch a new round of liberal trade Thursday, protestors took to the streets.

Police fired tear gas and used nightsticks in attempts to disperse a crowd in the city's center.

The press is full of complaints made by citizens against the city's authorities for violating their constitutional rights by declaring a state of emergency and setting a curfew.

Such measures have not been used in Seattle since World War II.

Citizens have also complained about the "brutal behavior" of the police, who have resorted to the use of tear gas and rubber bullets to control the demonstrators.

Many demonstrators have employed passive resistance measures, following rules distributed by protest groups, upon being arrested.

Seattle Mayor Paul Schell confirmed that passive resistance is the best way to employ freedom of expression.

Police have arrested 500 people so far, the majority of whom were taken to former military bases.

Friends and family members of those arrested told the press that their arrested relatives have not been allowed to contact lawyers, an infringement upon their constitutional rights.

A police spokesman said that those arrested are being charged with misdemeanors and are being fined 200 dollars. Several of the groups organizing the protests have stated they will pay the fines and return to the streets to continue their opposition to the WTO's stance on the environment and labor.

Organizations Announce Agenda to Confront Aids in 2000

New York, - A coalition of Hispanic organizations made public Thursday its agenda to deal with the growing problem of AIDS among Hispanics in New York, where this group makes up 31 percent of the cases registered among adults.

The first Hispanic summit on AIDS was held under the auspices of the Hispanic AIDS Forum and the Latino Issues Forum, in which the challenge of efficiently transmitting prevention messages to the Hispanic community was discussed.

Participants said one of the fundamental problems is that the funds necessary to implement effective educational campaigns are not reaching Hispanic communities.

"The priorities they use to assign funds are based on considerations taken from the past," said Heriberto Sanchez Soto, executive director of the Hispanic AIDS Forum.

Sanchez said the money is only being distributed among the organizations that first began to deal with Acute Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome and does not reach the budgets of dozens of organizations that have been created and work directly with the community.

According to Sanchez, another problem that Hispanics in New York face is that, even though it was approved last year, a law has not been implemented that makes reporting all new cases of people infected with the virus obligatory.

Therefore, the exact number of infected Hispanics in the city is not known.

To date, the only statistics kept are for patients that have actually developed the diverse complications of AIDS.

According to those statistics, published Thursday, Hispanics make up 25 percent of the population in New York City or 132,066 people. However, they account for 31 percent of all adult cases reported in the last few years.

In more than 60 percent of adult cases, infection occurred through drug use with contaminated hypodermic needles.

AIDS, which devastates the immune system, is the leading cause of death among Hispanics between the ages of 25 and 44.

According to Sanchez, the lack of effective campaigns in Hispanic communities and access to condoms by the young, who begin having sex at ever earlier ages, are factors that contribute to the increase in AIDS among Hispanics.

Sanchez said the Hispanic AIDS Forum drew up its work agenda, "Talks for Life about AIDS," and health priorities for the year 2000 after a series of meetings with community leaders in the city over the course of 1999.

The educational campaigns of these organizations will focus on parents and youths, with the goal of promoting trust and communication between them, and on the subject of sexual relations, its consequences and the use of condoms.

Momentary Victory for Opponents in Vieques

Washington, - President Bill Clinton on Friday approved the renewal of military exercises in Vieques, Puerto Rico next spring, but without live ammunition and with the proviso that maneuvers will be phased out over the next five years.

He also canceled training maneuvers by the carrier "Eisenhower, scheduled for this month near the island just off the east coast of Puerto Rico.

Clinton said the U.S. Navy, which has used live munitions on a Vieques bombing range for some 60 years, would quit the island in five years, "unless the people of Vieques decide to continue the relationship."

The decision implied a momentary victory for opponents of the controversial maneuvers of the U.S. Navy in Vieques - inhabited by 9,300 people - which have created tension between the United States and Puerto Rico, a U.S. commonwealth.

Clinton commented in a written statement issued after listening to the recommendations of Defense Secretary William Cohen.

Clinton also ordered the navy to reduce training days by one half and to use inert ammunition.

In April, Clinton suspended military maneuvers by the U.S. Navy, after two bombs hit an observation post, killing a Puerto Rican civilian employee of the U.S. Navy.

The suspension of the maneuvers was used by fishermen, independence seekers, unions and other civilian Puerto Rican groups to take over the bombing range and position "human shields" to prevent the resumption of exercises.

In the process, the Puerto Rican government, which initially had only ask for the Navy to use inert ammunition in its exercises, joined in the demand for a definitive end to navy maneuvers.

The Navy argued for the past eight months that Vieques was its "most important training center in the Atlantic."

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Not Enough Latino Judges In The Nation's Courtrooms

By ROBERT WADDELL
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NEW YORK, This year, several Latino judges had their day in court.

Four of President Clinton's seven federal judicial appointees were confirmed to the courts (four to district courts and none to the appellate). This brings to 20 the number of Latino appointments by Clinton to the federal level within the last seven years.

But even with this gain, federal Latino judges remain almost invisible. At present, there are 38 Latino district judges and 10 appellate judges nationwide, according to the Hispanic National Bar Association.

Menores en Busca de Asilo Sin Protección Legal

Los menores en busca de asilo sin protección legal

Susan E. Smith

Cientos de niños que ingresan ilegalmente cada año a Estados Unidos por cuenta propia, son deportados sin recibir asesoría legal, dicen funcionarios de inmigración y grupos de derechos humanos.

Los niños estadounidenses que entran en contacto con el sistema judicial tienen abogados designados por los tribunales, pero el Servicio de Inmigración y Naturalización (SIN) no tiene la obligación de proporcionar representación legal sin costo a estos niños no acompañados de adultos.

Muchos de estos niños y jóvenes, que llegan de naciones tan diferentes como Honduras o China, son regresados a países azotados por la violencia y la pobreza endémicas.

A medida que más niños son víctimas de la violencia y las guerras regionales, sin embargo, los grupos de derechos humanos y los abogados han comenzado a tratar de cambiar la ley.

"No hay ninguna otra área de la ley donde a los niños se los haga responder a acusaciones, comparecer ante un juez y autorrepresentarse, sin recibir el beneficio de un asesor legal", dice Steve Lang, coordinador y abogado de la organización Pro Bar, cuyo objetivo es la representación sin costo de candidatos a asilo en el sur de Texas.

Menos del 11% de los detenidos adultos obtiene representación legal durante los procedimientos de asilo, dice Wendy Young, autora de un estudio acerca de las prácticas estadounidenses concernientes al asilo cuando se trata de niños. Calcula que la cifra es significativamente menor para niños sin compañía de adultos.

Funcionarios del SIN dijeron no saber cuántos de los niños no acompañados reciben representación legal ni si se les concede asilo.

La ley estadounidense no requiere que los inmigrantes ilegales reciban representación legal. No obstante, a los niños

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"There's an easy and a more complicated answer," said Charles Kamasaki, vice-president of The National Council of La Raza (NCLR). "Latinos have a higher than average drop-out rate from high school, don't finish college and are not likely to go to law school."

The more difficult challenge, Kamasaki said, comes with the overall underrepresentation of Latinos in state and federal politics. With little political pressure placed from up above, Latinos have a harder time getting choice judicial appointments. "People in those positions use their own networks to identify qualified candidates and if we're not even in the room, we're left out," said Kamasaki.

Groups like NCLR, the Hispanic National Bar Association and the Puerto Rican Bar Association were instrumental in putting pressure on the senate judiciary committee, pushing the Latino appointments this year.

"The perception of a Latino is that he's an activist or a liberal judge," said Duard Bradshaw, chair of the judiciary committee for the Hispanic National Bar Association. "These are code words used against our people."

Bradshaw explained that if Latino appointees are perceived as 'advocacy judges' by senators, the result generally is that nominations are held up for an indefinite amount of time. This was the case with Judge Richard Paez of Los Angeles, who waited four years before his appoint-

ment was turned down by the senate. A judge or lawyer, added Bradshaw, basically puts his or her career on hold while the senate judiciary committee stalls.

"We have some outstanding lawyers left out of the process," said Lillian G. Apodaca, immediate past president of the Hispanic National Bar Association. "It's a question of political access." Apodaca believes that potential Latino candidates suffer the worst kind of racism -- they're not hated, they're ignored completely from the political process.

Another reason Latinos are left out of the process is the persistence of a black-white paradigm, said Carmen Joge, senior civil rights policy analyst for the NCLR. For many, "diversity" means simply adding a few African Americans into the mix. "We face barrier after barrier after barrier," said Joge. "[The establishment] sees things only in black or white. We've been unseen to society for years."

According to Joge, 5.3 percent of Clinton nominees were Latino while 17.6 percent were black. And she said that a larger percentage of nominations killed were those of Latinos.

In a Los Angeles Times article earlier this year, Antonia Hernandez, president of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, said Latinos hold 40 of 843 seats on the federal bench -- or 4.5 percent of the total, even though

they make up 11 percent of the nation's population will soon become the nation's largest minority.

"The lack of Latinos serving on the federal judiciary is certainly not the result of a lack of qualified candidates," said Roberto Lebron, president of the Puerto Rican Bar Association. "Just being nominated is a tremendous hurdle. It is critically important that the Latino community become more unified in its support of a candidate who is most likely to be nominated and confirmed."

Any divisiveness among Latinos, he said, serves as an excuse for the senate to not select qualified and deserving Latino candidates.

"We live in a democracy and senators respond to the pressure of phone calls and letter writing," said Bradshaw. "We also encourage lawyers to put their hat into the ring."

Apodaca said that in addition to federal judges, civil, municipal and state courts need more Latino judges as well. "We need them at all levels," she said, "a good diverse legal system."

She believes that grassroots efforts and judges on the lower courts will increase the pool of potential candidates for federal judgeships, and perhaps some day, for the Supreme Court.

"We're in the work force: schools, businesses," said Kamasaki. "It makes good sense to have government institutions that are diverse and representative of all of the people."

Five-Year Review Considers NAFTA's Effects Positive

By Olivia P. Tallet

Houston, - More than 40 speakers - including businessmen, politicians and academics - from the member-countries of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) on Tuesday said the treaty's results during its first five years have been positive and full of promise.

The international conference entitled "Access Mexico - Five Years of NAFTA: Past and Future" has been considered by many of the attendees as the fullest evaluation of the treaty between the United States, Mexico and Canada to date.

Houston port commissioner Vidal G. Martinez said the primary market of the port - which is ranked number seven in the world and first in the United States - is Mexico.

According to Martinez, "Our relationship with Mexico is growing rapidly. Seventy percent of the Mexican goods that enter the United States stay in Texas. We will continue as the most important state (for Mexican trade), with trade three times that of California's."

In Access Mexico, Houston's growing role as the capital of bilateral relations between Mexico and the United States was demonstrated. Monterrey is Mexico's counterpart to the eastern Texas city.

Houston currently absorbs 180 billion dollars of the region's trade, more than international commercial centers like Hong Kong, the commissioner said.

Texas currently has some 19 million residents, of which 30 percent are Hispanic. It is estimated that by 2017, Hispanics will comprise the majority of the state's population, likely resulting in closer cultural and language ties to Mexico.

Sen. Fernando Solana - former Mexican Foreign Secretary - said that the results of NAFTA in its first five years are spoken for by the growth in the economy of its member-nations, especially Mexico.

He added that trade among the three countries has grown considerably, especially between Mexico and the United States, between which it has doubled.

LULAC Council 263
Annual Senior Citizens
Christmas Dinner
Dec. 16, 1999
Maggie Trejo Supercenter
6:30 - 10:00 p.m.
Christmas dinner with Christmas Music,
Entertainment, Santa Claus/Pancho Claus,
Fruit/Candy Bags, Door Prizes

Ya Viene Pancho Clos



El Editor, Lubbock, Tx, December 9, 1999

La Reforma De La Inmigracion:**La Servidumbre Por Contrato No Es "La Manera De Los Estados Unidos"**

Por Mario Obledo

Durante los años, sectores poderosos de la sociedad estadounidense se han aprovechado de los trabajadores agrícolas y han abusado de ellos, a pesar de su papel vital como la columna vertebral de la industria agrícola de esta nación, abundante y aclamada internacionalmente.

El término "anti-estadounidense" describe con exactitud al maltrato histórico de los trabajadores agrícolas por parte de muchos de los cultivadores agrícolas y los políticos de esta nación en particular. Y eso podría empeorar si el Congreso de los Estados Unidos aprueba la propuesta más reciente de los negocios agrícolas, que reviviría las prácticas laborales agrícolas que eran inadecuadas para los siglos anteriores, mucho menos para el nuevo milenio.

Como nación, estamos bendecidos por una de las industrias agrícolas más productivas del mundo. En escala nacional, entre 1986 y 1995, el valor de las frutas, los vegetales y la horticultura -- todas ellas cosechas que exigen intensidad de mano de obra -- aumentó en un 52 por ciento hasta alcanzar \$15,100 millones. Las exportaciones de estos productos casi se cuadruplicaron entre 1986 y 1997, llegando a un valor de \$10,600 millones.

A pesar del aumento considerable de los ingresos, a muchos trabajadores agrícolas se les paga el mismo salario que ganaban hace decenios. Por ejemplo, en el estado de Washington, que produce más de la mitad de las manzanas que se consumen en la nación, todavía se paga a los trabajadores aproximadamente \$10 por recoger un envase de manzanas de una tonelada -- la misma paga que se les pagaba durante los 1960s y 1970s. En este estado igualmente, debido a que la infraestructura de la vivienda no ha acompañado al aumento sin precedentes de la industria, millares de familias se han quedado sin hogares, viviendo en campamentos rústicos, insalubres y peligrosos, en los cauces de los ríos o en los campos. Aquí, hombres, mujeres y niños usan cartón y plástico para protegerse de los elementos, emplean ríos fríos para bañarse y agua no purificada para cocinar.

¿Quién es responsable de esta

paradoja, que define a la poderosa industria agrícola de la nación? Una política pública defectuosa y discriminatoria que data a la segunda guerra mundial, combinadas con una saludable dosis de engaño y avaricia en el sector privado.

En 1942, para compensar las escaseces de mano de obra ocasionadas por la guerra, la política pública estadounidense sobre inmigración permitió la importación de millones de "braceros" mexicanos.

Después de la segunda guerra mundial, los patrones agrícolas convencieron al Congreso para que extendiera el programa "bracero," debido a una presunta escasez de mano de obra. El programa duró 22 años, oficialmente terminando en 1964. Quedó ampliamente desacreditado por sus abusos y por la explotación de muchos de los cinco millones de trabajadores mexicanos traídos a los Estados Unidos durante aquella época.

Pero el trabajo fundamental había sido sentado, por decirlo así. Durante 22 años, una fuerza laboral dócil y vulnerable había sido empleada para sembrar y recoger cosechas valiosas bajo circunstancias de vida y de trabajo que los trabajadores estadounidenses no aceptarían. Así nació un negocio agrícola floreciente, edificado sobre las espaldas de trabajadores mexicanos, y que no podía conseguir suficientes de ellos. Así, un programa "extra-oficial" bracero continuó más allá de 1964, y hoy florece con un guiño de las autoridades gubernamentales -- olvidense del cumplimiento de las leyes de inmigración y del trabajo, algunas de las cuales ofrecieron protección para los trabajadores.

Desde 1964, un negocio agrícola ha tenido éxito con fama para reclutar y contratar a sabiendas trabajadores mexicanos indocumentados. Ellos utilizan contratistas de mano de obra que continúan actualmente escurriendo a los cultivadores contra las infracciones de la ley del salario mínimo y otras leyes de trabajo. Al combinarse con el desempleo de dos cifras entre los trabajadores estadounidenses en las principales regiones agrícolas de la nación, el llamado programa "bracero" ha resultado en una superabundancia continua de trabajadores.

Esa es la razón de que a los

recogedores de manzanas del estado de Washington, y a otros trabajadores de toda la nación, se les pague la misma tarifa por trabajo a destajo que recibían hacen años. De modo perverso, la necesidad y la demanda funcionan en la agricultura. La paga ha continuado baja y las circunstancias de vivienda y trabajo son inferiores para cientos de miles de hombres, mujeres y niños que ayudan a que nos alimentemos.

Contribuye en gran medida a esta dinámica el cuerpo político de la nación. Los cultivadores habían desarrollado un poder económico y político tal para mediados de la década de 1960 que influían sobre quién era elegible y electo, especialmente en las zonas rurales agrícolas. Los efectos pueden verse hoy, ya que el dinero alimenta a la política y a los políticos como nunca antes.

Comenzando a los niveles más altos, los responsables de redactar las leyes de inmigración son los mismos que apremian a las autoridades de inmigración para que no las hagan cumplir. Un ejemplo reciente procede del estado de Georgia, donde los agentes del Servicio de Inmigración y Naturalización cometieron el error de efectuar una redada en los campos de cebollas Vidalia, famosos en todo el mundo, durante la temporada de la cosecha. Como lo informó el Washington Post (el 13 de julio de 1998), "llamadas ansiosas de los cultivadores de cebollas enviaron a dos legisladores republicanos (miembros del Congreso) apresurándose a regresar a su estado para frenar al INS. ... En el espacio de pocos días, el INS acordó no interferir otra vez con la cosecha de este año."

A pesar de las contradicciones deslumbrantes, la "voltereta" engañosa de la industria agrícola sobre los problemas a que se enfrenta es que hay una escasez grave de mano de obra. La escasez, alegan ellos, obliga a los cultivadores a depender de los "ilegales." Uno de los legisladores es nada menos que el senador Slade Gorton (republicano por el estado de Washington), que dijo el año pasado: "Tenemos una situación que convierte en infractores de la ley a casi todos los empleadores agrícolas de los Estados Unidos que necesitan mano

por temporadas."

La afirmación de Gorton estira la verdad más ancha que el Río Grande.

Un informe de 1995 de la Comisión de los Estados Unidos sobre la Reforma de la Inmigración concluyó que: "Si el suministro de trabajadores agrícolas ilegales terminara mañana, el número de trabajadores agrícolas autorizados para trabajar es amplio, aún en los meses de mayor demanda para la cosecha." Además, un informe de la Oficina de Contabilidad del Gobierno (GAO) en diciembre de 1997 llegó a una conclusión parecida: "No existe ahora escasez de mano de obra agrícola y es improbable en el futuro previsible."

Pero los cultivadores no quieren pagar jornales que los estadounidenses exigen conforme a la norma de nuestro país, consagrada por el tiempo, una paga justa por un día de trabajo justó. Negándose a plegarse a este concepto, los cultivadores procuran ahora usar su influencia política, cargada de dinero, para convencer al Congreso a fin de que los mantenga fortificados con una corriente continua de mano de obra barata y fácilmente explotable.

En octubre de 1999, algunos miembros del Congreso obedientes a los negocios agrícolas presentaron un proyecto de legislación (S. 1814) para crear un "programa de ajusté" para unos 500,000 trabajadores indocumentados que ya se hallan en este país. El proyecto, "Ley de Oportunidades para Empleos Agrícolas, Beneficios y Seguridad de 1999," crea la ilusión de la situación legal para los trabajadores "ajustados" en un espacio de cinco a siete años, pero dicha situación no sería factible para la mayoría debido a limitaciones y circunstancias onerosas que son favorables a los cultivadores y no a los trabajadores. Para los trabajadores, el S. 1814 deja fuera las protecciones para los trabajadores, las circunstancias de trabajo y la vivienda que están en el programa actual de trabajadores temporeros, conocido como H-2A.

El nuevo "programa de ajusté" exigiría un precio tremendo de los contribuyentes estadounidenses también. El Departamento del Trabajo de los Estados Unidos se convertiría en

una agencia nacional de reclutamiento y empleo para servir a millares de cultivadores de costa a costa. Los costos para empezar el programa solamente serían impresionantes para la creación de un supuesto "registro" de trabajadores que incluiría a todos los interesados en los empleos agrícolas. Pero el proyecto de legislación sugiere que estos costos serían cubiertos por otros fondos federales "disponibles."

Además, el Departamento del Trabajo se vería abrumado por muchos mandatos áridos, incluyendo a uno que dice: "El Secretario (del Trabajo) dará aviso rápidamente, pero en ningún caso después de 72 horas" de la necesidad de trabajadores. Una serie de directrices sensibles al tiempo le lleva a uno a suponer que podría haber beneficios en reserva para el gobierno, es decir, para los contribuyentes, si se cumplen las medidas estrictas de funcionamiento. Pero, ¡caramba! los dividendos se acumularán una vez más para un negocio agrícola ya poderoso, dando un significado nuevo al término "asistencia económica pública empresarial."

¿Por qué continúan los negocios agrícolas ofreciendo tales propuestas? Por una razón, dados sus éxitos anteriores con el Congreso, la industria tiene poca razón para creer que no obtendrá lo que procura.

La razón subyacente, no obstante, es el control. Los trabajadores "ajustados" dependerían de los cultivadores para tener el derecho de entrar a los Estados Unidos a trabajar. El exigir pagos más altos, cambiar de empleos para lograr la mejoría de las circunstancias de trabajo, o renunciar al trabajo como protesta, ocasionarían que los trabajadores "ajustados" perdieran el derecho a trabajar en los Estados Unidos. La historia nos ha enseñado que los trabajadores temporeros no inmigrantes, con su situación vulnerable, pueden ser tenidos de rehenes por empleadores sin escrúpulos y obligados a tolerar un tratamiento inhumano.

Los cultivadores ofrecen el argumento cínico de que los trabajadores "ajustados" estarán mejor porque estarían aquí legalmente. Pero la explotación es reprobable, ya sea que tenga el imprimatur de la ley o no. Ningún grupo de trabajadores de

este país debería estar sujeto perpetuamente a una situación de impotencia que perjudique su capacidad para mejorar sus niveles de vida.

El "programa de ajusté" propuesto por la industria agrícola debería ser descartado y reconocido por lo que representa -- una servidumbre por contrato para un nuevo milenio. Si los cultivadores quieren tener una fuerza de trabajo estable y productiva, que paguen jornales equitativos y justos, y que las leyes de la oferta y la demanda funcionen sin interferencia del gobierno y sin subvenciones públicas impresionantes.

Y si el Congreso de los Estados Unidos determina que se necesita de los trabajadores mexicanos para mantener una fuerza de trabajo agrícola productiva, que promulgue legislación que suministre la situación de inmigrantes (que pudiera llevar a la ciudadanía de los Estados Unidos) para los trabajadores y sus familias, que aportan mucho a nuestro modo de vida.

Esa es la "manera de los Estados Unidos."

(Mario Obledo es el presidente de la Cumbre Nacional Latina sobre el Proyecto de Legislación de Trabajadores "braceros," y presidente de la Coalición Nacional de Organizaciones Hispánicas, con sede en Sacramento, California. En 1998, Obledo recibió del Presidente Clinton el Galardón de la Medalla Presidencial de la Libertad, el más alto galardón civil de la nación.)

NOTA A LOS EDITORES: El Sr. Obledo y los líderes de la Cumbre Nacional Latina anticipan que trabajarán contra el proyecto de la reciente legislación sobre "Trabajadores Braceros," el S. 1814, empezando en enero del año 2000. Ellos pedirán a organizaciones latinas y a las personas de todo el país que se unan para derrotar cualquier intento de restablecer la "servidumbre por contrato" y para convencer al Congreso de los Estados Unidos y a la administración Clinton que apoyen legislación que trate a los trabajadores agrícolas con el respeto y la dignidad que tan abundantemente merecen.

Comuníquense con Cristina Chávez Cook, de MALDEF (Fondo Mexicano para la Defensa Legal y la Educación) por el teléfono (202) 293-2828, o por el indicativo de Internet: chavez-cook@AT-SIGN/maldef.org para obtener mayor información.

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Immigration Reform: Indentured Servitude Isn't "The American Way"

By Mario Obledo

For decades now, powerful sectors in U.S. society have taken advantage of and abused farm workers, despite the laborers' vital role as the backbone of this nation's bountiful and internationally acclaimed agricultural industry.

The term "un-American" aptly describes the historical mistreatment of farm workers by many of the nation's agricultural growers and politicians, in particular. And it could get worse if Congress approves agribusiness's most recent proposal which would revive agricultural labor practices unfit for centuries past, much less the new millennium.

As a nation, we are blessed with one of the most productive agricultural industries in the world. Nationally, between 1986 and 1995, the value of fruits, vegetables, and horticulture--all labor intensive crops--grew by 52 percent to \$15.1 billion. Exports of these products nearly quadrupled between 1986 and 1997, reaching \$10.6 billion in value.

Despite the sharp increase in revenues, many farm workers are paid the same piece rate as they earned decades ago. For example, in Washington state, which produces more than half of the apples consumed in the nation, workers still are paid roughly \$10 for picking a one-ton bin of apples -- the same piece rate paid in the 1960s and 1970s. In this state, too, because a housing infrastructure has not accompanied unprecedented growth of the industry, thousands of families are left homeless, living in crude, unsanitary and dangerous encampments on the banks of rivers or in fields. Men, women and children use cardboard and plastic to protect themselves from nature's elements. They bathe in cold rivers and cook with untreated irrigation water.

What is responsible for this paradox, which defines the nation's powerful agricultural industry? In brief, flawed and discriminatory public policies that date back to World War II. And a healthy dose of deceit and greed in the private sector.

In 1942, to meet labor shortages caused by the war, U.S. immigration policies allowed for the importation of millions of Mexican "braceros" (literally, "arms"). After World War II, agricultural employers persuaded

Congress to extend the bracero program because of an alleged labor shortage. The program lasted 22 years, officially ending in 1964. It was widely discredited for its abuses and exploitation of many of the 5 million Mexican workers brought to the United States during that time.

But the groundwork had been laid, so to speak. For 22 years, a docile, vulnerable labor force had been used to plant vast orchards and harvest valuable crops under living and working conditions U.S. workers wouldn't accept. A booming agribusiness was borne, built on the backs of Mexican laborers, and it couldn't get enough of them. Thus, an "unofficial" bracero program continued beyond 1964 -- and it flourishes today with a nod and a wink from governmental authorities; forget about enforcement of immigration and labor laws, some of which offered protections for workers.

Since 1964, agribusinesses have been famously successful at recruiting and knowingly hiring undocumented Mexicans. They use farm labor contractors, who continue to shield growers from violations of minimum-wage and other labor laws. When combined with double-digit unemployment among U.S. workers in major agricultural regions in the nation, the unofficial bracero program has resulted in a continual glut of workers.

That is why apple pickers in Washington state, and other workers across the nation, get paid the same piece rate as they did decades ago. In a perverse way, the laws of supply and demand are at work in agriculture. Wages have remained depressed, and living and working conditions substandard for hundreds of thousands of men, women and children who help feed us.

Contributing greatly to these dynamics is the body politic of the nation. By the mid-1960s, growers had developed such economic and political power that they influenced who was electable and elected, especially in rural areas. Today money fuels politics and politicians as never before.

At the highest levels, those responsible for writing immigration laws are the same people who pressure immigration authorities not to enforce them. A recent example comes from Georgia, where, last year, INS

agents made the mistake of raiding the famous Vidalia onion fields during harvest season. As the Washington Post then reported, "Anxious calls from onion growers sent two Republican lawmakers (members of Congress) hurrying home to rein in the INS. ... Within days, the INS agreed not to interfere again with this year's harvest."

Despite such glaring contradictions, the agricultural industry puts a deceitful spin on reality, claiming there is a severe labor shortage. That "shortage" forces growers to rely on "illegal aliens." One spin doctors is none other than U.S. Sen. Slade Gorton (R-Wash.), who said last year, "We have a situation that makes a violator of the law out of almost every agricultural employer in the United States of America who needs labor on a seasonal basis."

Gorton's assertion stretches the truth wider than the Rio Grande.

A 1995 report by the U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform concluded, "If the supply of illegal farm workers dried up tomorrow, the supply of work-authorized farm workers is ample, even in peak harvest months."

Further, a December 1997 Governmental Accounting Office report concluded: "A farm-labor shortage does not now exist and is unlikely in the foreseeable future."

Still, growers won't pay wages that Americans demand under our country's time-honored standard of "a fair day's pay for a fair day's work." Refusing to buckle, growers now seek to use their political, money-laden leverage to persuade Congress to keep them fortified with a steady flow of cheap, easily exploitable labor.

In October 1999, some agribusiness-compliant members of Congress introduced legislation (S. 1814) to create an "adjustment program" for an estimated 500,000 undocumented workers already in this country.

S. 1814, the Agricultural Job Opportunity Benefits and Security Act of 1999, creates the illusion of legal status for "adjusted" workers in five to seven years, but such status would not be attainable for most because of onerous restrictions and conditions that are favorable to growers, not workers. For workers, S. 1814 omits pro-

tections for wages, working conditions and housing that are in the current temporary-worker program known as H2A.

The new "adjustment program" would exact a tremendous price from U.S. taxpayers, too. The Department of Labor would become a national recruitment and employment agency to serve thousands of growers coast to coast. The start-up costs alone would be staggering for creation of a proposed worker "registry" to include all workers interested in agricultural employment. (The legislation suggests that the start-up costs could be covered by other "available" federal funds.)

Moreover, the Labor Department would be saddled with arduous mandates, including one that says, "The Secretary shall expeditiously, but in no case later than 72 hours" provide notice of a need for workers. A series of time-sensitive directives leads one to infer that there could be bonuses for the government (i.e., taxpayers) if the stringent performance measures are met. But, alas, the dividends accrue once again to agribusiness, bringing new meaning to the term "corporate welfare."

Why does agribusiness continue to offer such proposals? For one, given its past successes with Congress, the industry has little reason to believe it won't obtain what it seeks. But the underlying reason is control. "Adjusted" workers would be dependent on growers for the right to come into the United States to work. Demanding higher wages, or trying to change jobs for improved working conditions, or quitting a job in protest could lose them right to work in the United States. History has taught us that non-immigrant, temporary workers can be held hostage by unscrupulous employers and forced to endure inhumane treatment.

Growers offer the cynical argument that "adjusted" workers would be better off because they would be here legally. But exploitation is reprehensible, whether it has the imprimatur of law or not. No workers in this country should be subjected to a powerless status that impedes their ability to improve their standard of life.

The agricultural industry's proposed "adjustment program" should be dismissed and re-

ognized for what it represents -- indentured servitude for a new millennium. If the growers want a stable, productive work force, let them pay fair and just wages, and let the laws of supply and demand work without governmental interference, and without massive public subsidies.

And if Congress determines that Mexican workers are needed to maintain a productive agricultural work force, let it enact legislation that provides immigrant status (that could lead to U.S. citizenship) for workers and their families who contribute so much to our way of life.

Now that's the American way. (Mario Obledo is chair of the National Latino Summit on "Guest-Worker" Legislation, and president of the National Coalition of Hispa-

Organizations, based in Sacramento, Calif. In 1998, Obledo received from President Clinton the Presidential Medal of Freedom Award, the nation's highest civilian award.)

Mr. Obledo and leaders of the National Latino Summit on "Guest-Worker" Legislation anticipate working against the latest "guest-worker" legislation, S. 1814, beginning January 2000. They will call on Latino organizations and individuals across the nation to join with them in defeating any attempt to re-establish indentured servitude, and to persuade Congress and the Clinton administration to support legislation that treats farm workers with the respect and dignity they so richly deserve. Contact Cristina Chavez Cook, MALDEF, at 202-293-2828 (e-mail: chavez-cook@maldef.org for more information.)

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Un Siglo De Suenos Pasado, Otro Que Viene

Por Kay Bárbaro

Pintando el siglo que termina por las cifras:

UN HOMBRE, CUATRO SUENOS:

Las dos décadas de Ricardo Pimentel en el negocio del periodismo incluyeron 11 años como reportero con la cadena McClatchy de California Bees, incluyendo un espacio de tiempo como corresponsal en Washington. Prestó servicios como editor adjunto del Stockton Record y el Tucson Citizen, así como editor ejecutivo del San Bernardino County Sun. Mientras tanto, sacó tiempo para escribir una buena novela, "The House Of Two Doors."

Y al comenzar el año que viene -- el 3 de enero para ser exactos -- se convertirá en un columnista con The Arizona Republic de Phoenix.

De una vida que empezó en los campos, Pimentel reflexiona: "Cuando era un niño, soñaba con ser reportero. Cuando eso sucedió, soñaba con ser un editor y después soñé con escribir un libro. Mi último sueño fue tener mi propia columna, proporcionar una voz latina. Ahora todos se han convertido en realidad."

25 HEROES DEL PERIODISMO:

La revista Editor & Publisher acaba de producir una edición centenaria especial honrando a las 25 personas más influyentes del periodismo en el Siglo 20. No falta decir que, entre los Pulitzers, Hearsts y Woodward y Bernsteins, no había ningún hispano. Cuatro mujeres y un afroamericano -- el fundador del Chicago Defender, Robert Sengstacke Abbott -- formaron la lista.

Nos quedamos preguntándonos si el valeroso columnista del Los Angeles Times y director de noticias de KMEX-TV, Rubén Salazar, podría haber llegado a ese círculo selecto si un alguacil del Condado de Los Angeles no lo hubiera matado el 29 de agosto de 1970.

Ocurrió mientras Rubén, que acababa de cumplir 42 años de edad, estaba cubriendo una manifestación en el este de Los Angeles contra la guerra de Vietnam. En las semanas inmediatamente anteriores a su muerte, Salazar tuvo varios encuentros desagradables con la policía de Los Angeles, por sus reportajes sobre la violencia policiaca contra los hispanos. El se

reunió con funcionarios de la Comisión de los Estados Unidos sobre Derechos Civiles (USCRC, en inglés) recordando cómo la policía estaba siguiéndolo y temía que estaban tratando de matarlo.

UNA ESPERA DE CINCO AÑOS:

Hasta hace un par de semanas, el reportero del Times, Robert López, esperó pacientemente una respuesta del Departamento de Justicia a su solicitud para conseguir información sobre el caso Salazar en los archivos de la FBI. López esperaba que esos documentos pudieran dar alguna luz sobre la muerte de Rubén.

Rubén fue víctima de un disparo a la cabeza mientras estaba en el Silver Dollar Café, a varias cuadras de una manifestación disturbio organizada por grupos chicanos. Fue alcanzado por un proyectil de gas lacrimógeno, disparado por un alguacil, que desapareció de la vista poco después.

Un jurado del forense sólo concluyó que Rubén había "muerto a manos de otra persona." No se presentaron acusaciones después de una rápida investigación.

El conjunto de documentos de la FBI por fin le llegó a López hace un par de semanas. Abarcaba un amplio espacio de la vida de Salazar como corresponsal del Times en México y un viaje que hizo a Cuba como periodista. Doce páginas del documento de 277 páginas fueron retenidas por razones de "seguridad nacional." Otros partes fueron tachados con tinta negra. El titular del artículo de López fue: "Los Archivos Ponon Poca Luz Sobre

Muerte de Periodista."

Al continuar prosiguiendo las pistas, López dice que cuando empezó a rastrear el relato hace varios años, se sentía seguro de que la muerte de Rubén había sido un accidente trágico. "Pero hubo demasiadas coincidencias extrañas," reflexiona él ahora. "Mi reacción fundamental -- sospecho que no fué así de sencillo."

DIEZ FACTORES DEL PODER:

Un artículo del Times no relacionado, publicado el 28 de noviembre, menciona a los "factores del poder" de Los Angeles -- 10 hombres angelinos, ricos e influyentes, que calladamente dirigen la ciudad. Esta vez se menciona a un hispano, pero no a ningún afroamericano.

¿Quién es el latino? No es uno de los jóvenes políticos latinos recién llegados el que figura en los periódicos en estos días. Mas bien, es el transplantado Henry Cisneros, que ahora dirige la red de televisión Univisión. Texas, Washington, California -- dondequiera que él va, Henry Cisneros da vuelta a la magia.

En el siglo XXI, ¿resurgirá Cisneros políticamente?

¿Tendrá Ricardo Pimentel un quinto sueño?

¿Se escribirá un epílogo para el drama de Rubén Salazar?

(Kay Bárbaro es un pseudónimo usado por el personal del Hispanic Link Weekly Report para la columna "Sin Pelos en la Lengua." Esta columna fué redactada por el editor Charlie Ericksen.)

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A Century of Dreams Gone By, Another Ahead

By Kay Bárbaro

Painting the setting century by the numbers:

ONE MAN, FOUR DREAMS:

Ricardo Pimentel's two decades in daily journalism included 11 years as a reporter with the McClatchy chain of California Bees, including a stint as Washington correspondent. He served as managing editor of the Stockton Record and at the Tucson Citizen, and executive editor of the San Bernardino County Sun. In between, he squeezed in time to write a good novel, "House With Two Doors."

And starting next century -- Jan. 3, to be precise -- he becomes a regular columnist with The Arizona Republic in Phoenix.

Of a life that started in the fields, Pimentel muses: "When I was a kid, I dreamed of being a reporter. When that happened, I dreamed of being an editor, and then I dreamed about writing a book. My last dream was about having my own column, to provide a Latino voice. Now they've all come true."

25 JOURNALISM HEROES:

The magazine Editor & Publisher has just produced a special centennial issue honoring the 25 most influential newspaper people of the 20th Century.

Needless to say, among the Pulitzers, Hearsts and Woodward/Bernsteins, there were no Hispanics. Four women and one African American -- Chicago Defender founder Robert Sengstacke Abbott -- made the list.

We're left to wonder whether courageous Los Angeles Times columnist/KMEX-TV news director Rubén Salazar might have

reached that select circle if a Los Angeles County sheriff's deputy hadn't killed him Aug. 29, 1970.

It happened while Rubén, just 42, was covering an East Los Angeles anti-Vietnam War rally. In the weeks just before his death, Salazar had several nasty run-ins with L.A.'s law-enforcement powers over his coverage of police violence against Hispanics. He met with officials from the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, recounting how the police were following him and he feared they were out to get him.

FIVE-YEAR WAIT:

Up until a couple of weeks ago, Times reporter Robert López was waiting patiently for a Justice Department response to his 1994 Freedom of Information Act request for the FBI's files on Salazar. López hoped the documents might shed new light on Rubén's death.

Rubén was shot through the head while sitting in the Silver Dollar Cafe, blocks from a major disturbance the Chicano protest had caused. He was hit by an armor-piercing tear-gas projectile fired by a sheriff's deputy, who vanished from sight soon afterward.

A coroner's jury concluded only that Rubén had "died at the hands of another." No charges were filed after a quick investigation.

The FBI package finally came to López a couple weeks ago. It covering a broad span of Salazar's life as a Times' correspondent in Mexico and a trip he took to Cuba as a journalist. Twelve

pages of the 277-page document were withheld entirely for "national security" reasons. Other passages were blacked out.

The headline on López's story "Files Shed Little Light on Journalist's Death."

Continuing to pursue leads, López says that when he first began tracking the story several years ago, he felt certain that Rubén's death was a tragic accident. "But there were too many strange coincidences," he says now. "My gut reaction -- I suspect it wasn't that simple."

TEN POWER PLAYERS:

An unrelated Times story published Nov. 28 lists Los Angeles' "power players" -- 10 rich and influential male Angelenos who quietly shape the city. This time, one Hispanic and no blacks are listed.

The Latino? It's not one of the young Latino political comers who make the papers a lot these days. Rather, it's transplanted Henry Cisneros, who now heads the Spanish-language television network Univisión. Wherever he goes -- Texas, Washington, California -- Henry Cisneros spins magic.

In the 21st century, will Cisneros re-emerge politically?

Will Ricardo Pimentel have a fifth dream?

Will an epilogue be written to the Rubén Salazar drama?

(Kay Bárbaro is a pseudonym used by Hispanic Link Weekly Report staff members for the regular column "Sin Pelos en la Lengua," or "Telling It Like It Is." This column was written by editor Charlie Ericksen.)

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una conexión vía satélite desde los Angeles, el galardón de "artista masculino más de moda" en 1999 y el actor Ruppert Everett, fue elegido el famoso "con más estilo" en la categoría masculina, mientras que la actriz Heather Graham lo consiguió en el apartado femenino.

Tom Ford, de la firma "Gucci", fue considerado el "diseñador de ropa para la mujer" más destacado del año.

La sala estaba repleta de famosos y algunos de ellos, como la cantante Madonna o la actriz Sharon Stone, llamaron la atención de los asistentes precisamente por el estilo conservador de las prendas que lucían.



Jennifer Lopez, Elegida Artista Mas a La Moda Por "Vogue"

Nueva York, - La actriz y cantante de origen hispano Jennifer López es la "artista más a la moda" del año, según la prestigiosa revista "Vogue" que anoche entregó sus premios anuales en una espectacular fiesta celebrada en Manhattan.

La artista hispana lucía un deslumbrante vestido beige con incrustaciones brillantes y un generoso escote y fue una de las más aclamadas por los numerosos curiosos que se agolparon a las puertas del edificio del 69 Regi-

miento de Infantería, uno de los más emblemáticos de Nueva York donde tuvo lugar la fiesta.

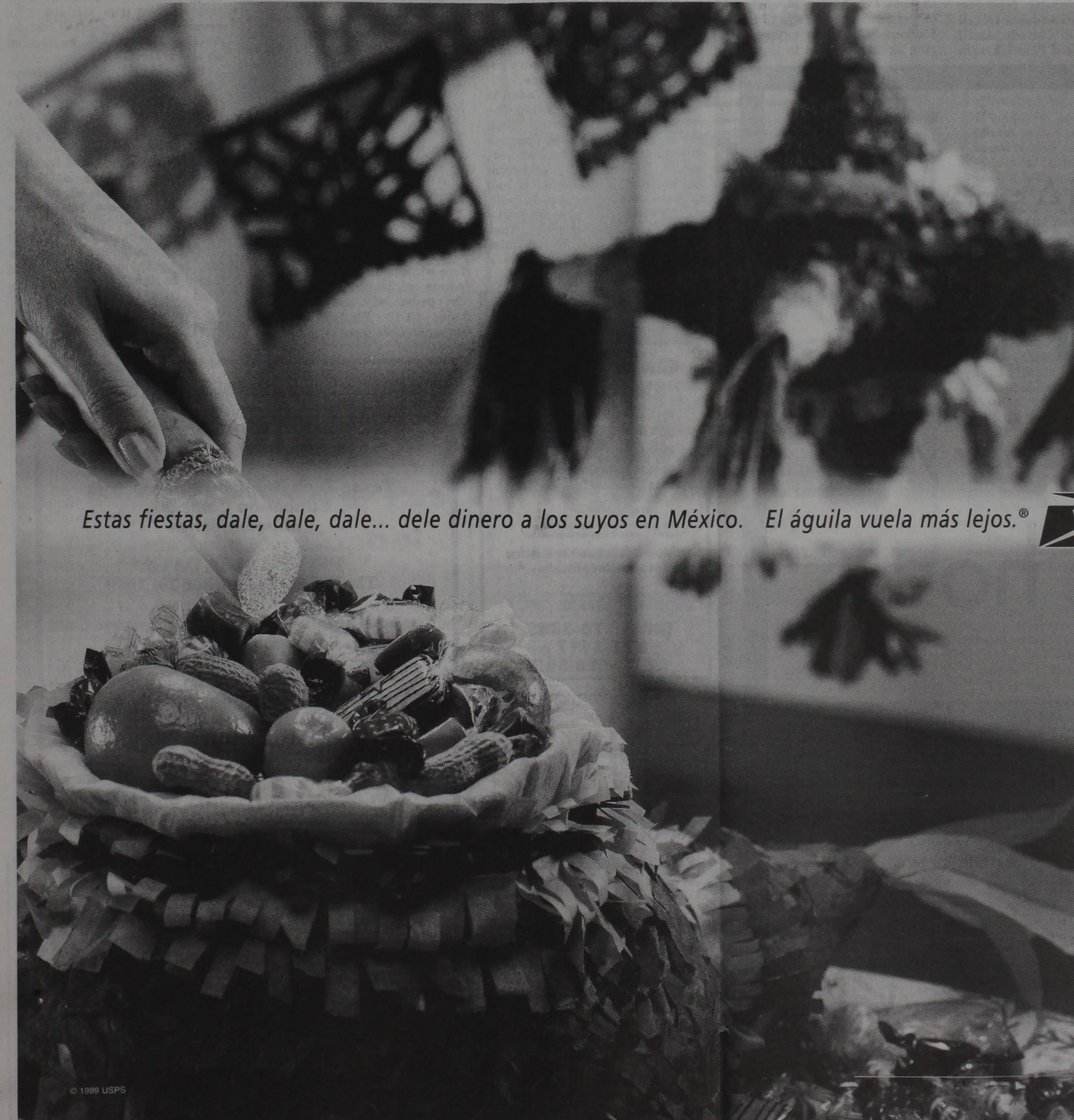
Estrellas de la música y de la pantalla grande, diseñadores y cotizadas modelos como Cindy Crawford acudieron al evento, que es uno de los actos sociales que atrae mayor atención entre los profesionales de la moda y del mundo del espectáculo.

La brasileña Gisele Bündchen, que lucía una minifalda de cuero negro y una ceñi-

da camisa de tonos suaves, fue elegida "modelo del año".

El diseñador Alexander McQueen fue considerado el profesional más vanguardista de 1999 y de ello quedó constancia con el modelo que lució la cantante de "rap" Lil'Kim, ataviada con un conjunto claro transparente y una máscara que a más de uno hizo pensar en una versión femenina del célebre personaje de ficción de "El Zorro".

El cantante de rock Lenny Kravitz agradeció, a través de



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Texas Tech Finds Coach

LUBBOCK, Texas- Mike Leach, offensive coordinator at Oklahoma, was hired today as Texas Tech's head coach.

"We're really excited about having Mike as the next football coach," Myers said. "I think Mike, with his exciting, wide-open style of offense, will excite the fans, gain national recognition for the university and attract top recruits," Texas Tech athletic director Gerald Myers said. "It will bring a whole new level of excitement to Texas Tech football."

"He is an outstanding coach - one of the finest young coaches in the country," Myers said. "We feel good about Mike coming in to lead our program."

During football practice Wednesday, a teary-eyed Leach told his team he had been offered the top job at Texas Tech when he visited the school Tuesday.



Leach to bring offensive firepower to Lubbock.

Cowboys May Turn To Deion to Revive Offense

IRVING, Texas -- With little else working for the Dallas offense, Cowboys coach Chan Gailey may finally use Deion Sanders at wide receiver.

Although Gailey was noncommittal Monday, the idea has been raised by Sanders and seconded by team owner Jerry Jones, making it highly likely that the All-Pro cornerback will return to double duty -- or triple if you count returning punts -- against Philadelphia on Sunday. "We certainly would look at all possibilities to give our offense a spark and that's one way it could happen," Gailey said. "He doesn't have the knowledge of our routes and things like that, except for what he's retained from last year because he hasn't practiced there any this year. But he certainly has big-play ability."

The Cowboys (6-6) failed to score an offensive touchdown for the first time in 16 games in their 13-6 loss to New England on Sunday night.

Over the last eight quarters, Dallas has just one touchdown from Troy Aikman, Emmitt Smith & Co. The unit has scored two touchdowns in the last 12 quarters and three in 17.

The offensive ineptness was especially apparent against the Patriots. Dallas couldn't reach the end zone despite starting boyant style of Naseem Hamed. He was in a cage, which of course prompted ringside wise guys to wonder whether he just was getting used to the bars.

More Vargas: Ike Quartey was at ringside for Vargas' difficult victory. He must have walked away feeling very optimistic. Vargas might defend his title at Las Vegas in April against Quartey, who lost a narrow decision to Oscar De La Hoya for the World Boxing Council's welterweight title.

Another Oscar: More and more, it appears that De la Hoya will fight Derrell Coley, probably on Feb. 26 at New York's Madison Square Garden. Coley is the WBC's No. 1 rated welterweight. However, it's still unclear whether the WBC title will be vacant. Felix Trinidad still has it, despite repeated speculation that he'll be stripped of it.

No room for error: Tony Ayala, Jr., hopes to push his record to 3-0 this Saturday against Tony Menefee at San Antonio, his hometown. "This is like a world championship fight for me," said Ayala, who was released from prison last spring after a 16-year stretch on a rape conviction. "At this stage of my life and career, people aren't going to tolerate many losses."

And poor Paul Vaden is left to deal with haunting the responsibility of having been the man who threw the punches at Johnson. "I was the last person to hit him," Vaden said from his home in San Diego. "It had to have something to do with me. Of course, I feel some guilt." Vaden also said, ruefully, that his critics would often dismiss him by saying: "I don't have a killer's instinct."

one drive at the New England 8-yard line and reaching the 17 on another.

"I don't think you can say it's one particular thing," Aikman said. "The penalties, a big negative play that will set us back, we won't convert a third down, a poor throw -- it's a different number of things that will kill our drives."

Injuries have knocked out several key players and nobody else has stepped up to make big plays. Smith hasn't scored since breaking his right hand five games ago and defenses are making sure not to let Raghib Ismail beat them deep.

That's where Sanders thinks he can help.

"I want to play offense," Sanders said. "I've dropped subtle hints to the coach, but now I'm ready to go out there and do whatever it takes. It's time to throw everything out there."

Sanders caught seven passes for 100 yards, including a 55-yarder, last season. In 1996, when he saw his most action on offense, he had 36 receptions for 475 yards and a touchdown.

"He will command some sort of attention if he is on the

field," Gailey said.

Deion Sanders might be counted on to add some excitement to the Dallas offense.

Fear of injury is the main reason Gailey has been reluctant to play Sanders both ways. Sanders missed the first two games this season recovering from toe surgery. He's since had problems with groin and hamstring injuries, but he insists that he's healthy.

"The routes and things like that are not something he does every day, so you're putting him in maybe a little of an unnatural position and maybe you risk an injury," Gailey said. "But that could be minimized because he is a great athlete."

Because he's not a polished route-runner, Sanders could have trouble being in synch with Aikman. Then again, Aikman hasn't exactly been clicking with rookie Wane McGarity, NFL Europe product Jason Tucker and second-year receiver Jason Ogden.

"I know I'm dreaming," said Jones, "but I think he could help us in some of the offensive packages."

****Green Bay 22, Carolina 18**
The Packers are 3-0 against the Panthers, but this is a tough pick nonetheless -- like last year, when G.B. won a shootout, 37-30. The Pack can't run, and Carolina has a decent pass defense.

****Indianapolis 27, New England 20**

Down 28-7 to the Colts at the half 12 weeks ago, the Patriots shut Indy down from then on and won a stunner 31-28. The Colts will finally end N.E.'s winning streak in this series at seven.

Miami 17, **N.Y. Jets 7

Last year the Jets swept the Dolphins for the first time since '93, 20-9 and 21-16, and despite their '99 records, Miami will have to stop N.Y. on the ground to keep it from happening again.

Minnesota 28, **Kansas City 14

This matchup will feature lots of passing against secondaries that have given up too many yards. K.C., which leads the series 4-3, was a 21-6 winner the last time they met, three years ago.

****Pittsburgh 19, Baltimore 16**

On a Kris Brown field goal as time expired, the Steelers fought off the Ravens in September for their sixth win in seven series games, 23-20. Another close one, to be decided on the ground.

St. Louis 33, **New Orleans 13

Two weeks ago the Rams started slowly against the Saints but scored 28 second-half points and ran away from N.O. 43-12. St. Louis will get its sixth win in this rivalry's last eight games.

****San Francisco 14, Atlanta 12**

NFL schedulers saved both 49ers-Falcons games for late in the season, probably hoping they'd be battling for the NFC West title. Atlanta beat S.F. last, 20-18 in the '98 divisional playoffs.

continued on page 6

Boxing Protects No One

By Norm Frauenheim

They'll bury Stephan Johnson on Friday. He wasn't a champion. He wasn't even a contender.

He didn't fight for fame.

Or fortune.

He had none of either.

He fought, his fiancée Bonnie Smith said, because he loved boxing.

But boxing loves nobody.

And it protects no one, not even its own.

In Johnson, the sport failed one of its loyal, anonymous warriors. Punches have killed before, and they will kill again. But they didn't have to kill Johnson. He could have been saved. He could have been stopped in his march to that fateful, fatal moment on Nov. 20 when he collapsed in Atlantic City after he was struck by a couple of blows from middleweight Paul Vaden.

The record shows that he was allowed to fight in South Carolina and Georgia after he was placed under medical suspension following a loss in Toronto. Since Johnson's death Sunday night, officials in both states have said that they were aware of the medical suspension. But if they in fact knew about the suspension, they did nothing about it.

There were no calls from either Georgia or South Carolina, said Ken Hayashi, the Ontario sports official who suspended Johnson.



Why not?

That is the question being asked by some government officials who are supposed to be in the difficult business of sometimes protecting fighters from themselves. Johnson wanted to continue, despite pleas for him to quit from his mom and even his trainer. That's why an impartial official is there. He's supposed to step in and say no.

"Nobody fights in this state unless I'm certain they have a clean bill of health," said John Montana, executive director of the Arizona State Boxing Commission and vice president of a national association that has attempted to establish some uniformity on the mix of rules that characterize a chaotic sport.

"If there is a medical suspension in another state or in Canada, that fighter will not fight here until he gets it cleared up. That suspension could be from anywhere."

In the wake of Johnson's death, Hayashi is asking that suspensions be honored, regardless of borders. In part, Johnson slipped through the cracks because there is no U.S. mandate to honor a suspension issued in Canada or any other country.

Hayashi said Johnson passed a CAT scan in Ontario after he was beaten badly by Fitz Vanderpool last April. But a possible abnormality resulted in Hayashi issuing a suspension that required Johnson to undergo two more neurological tests. He didn't take either test. Instead, he fought, and won, twice.

"I would have demanded that he take those two tests," Montana said. "I would have wanted a clean bill of health from our own doctor. I would have talked to the doctors in Canada, and I would have asked Ken Hayashi

for his opinion.

"If I hear of a possible abnormality, that's it. 'Possible' is too much for me.

"This is not show business." But it might be negligence.

Briefly ...

* First a poll, then a couple of ferrets. Mike Tyson couldn't win last week. In a poll of Nevada residents, 59 percent said they didn't want Tyson to fight in Las Vegas again. Then the ferrets -- one dead, the other alive -- had Tyson under attack from an animal-rights crowd that apparently specializes in ferrets. One was found dead in its cage and the other in anguish atop the same cage behind Tyson's mansion in Las Vegas. Tyson was actually called a potential ferret-abuser. He's been called worse. Meanwhile, he might fight in England on Jan. 29 against British Commonwealth champion Julius Francis. The ferrets favor Francis.

* The nominees: The Boxing Writers Association of America has nominated Paulie Ayala, Felix Trinidad, Roy Jones, Jr. and Erik Morales for Fighter of the Year. Somehow, Ricardo Lopez was left off the ballot. Lopez moved up in weight to win the International Boxing Federation's junior-flyweight title after history's longest reign as the World Boxing Council's straw-weight champ.

* IBF junior-middleweight champion Fernando Vargas was lucky -- very lucky -- to get a decision over Ronald "Winky" Wright Dec. 4. Vargas' problems with the law might have been a distraction. He faces assault charges as a result of an incident several months ago in Santa Barbara, Calif. He entered the ring against Wright in the flam-

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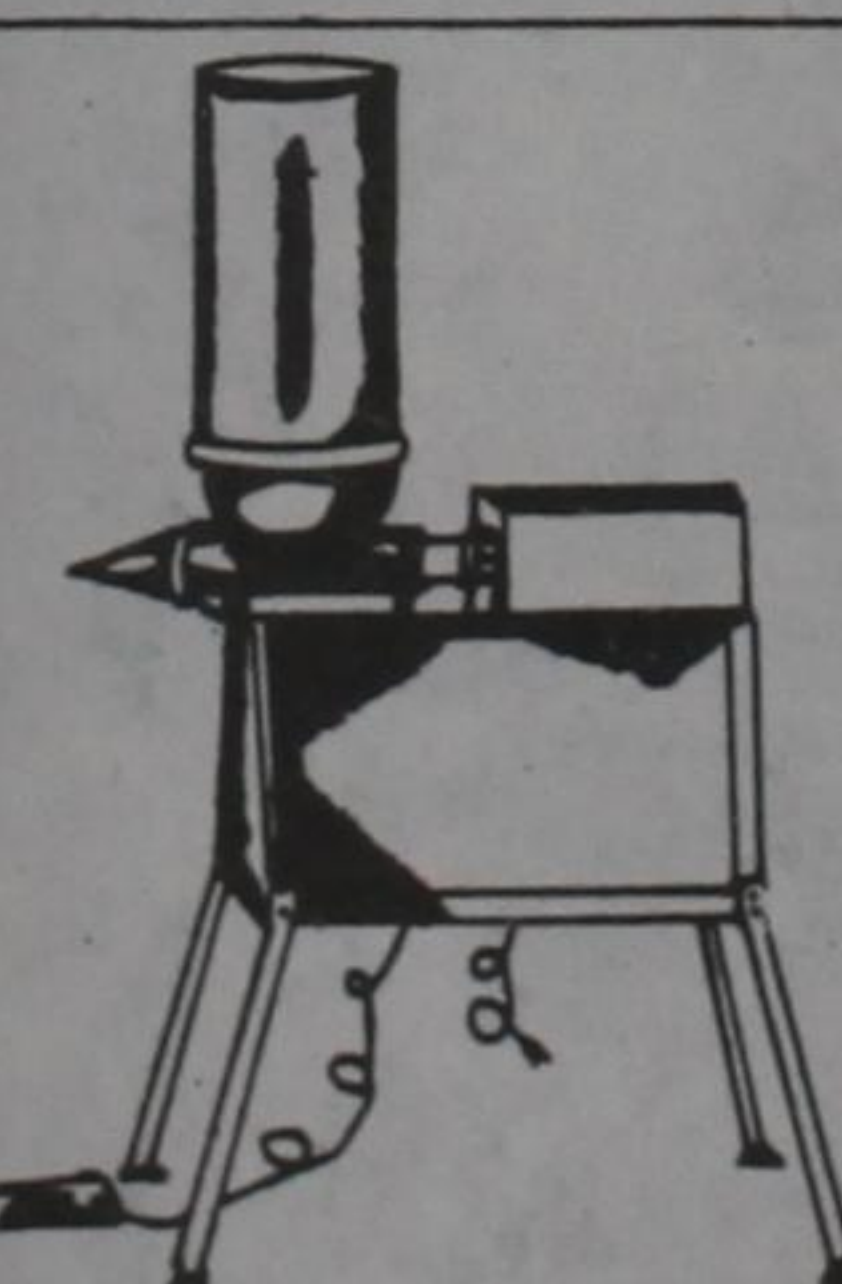
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From Page One

se les da una lista de abogados dispuestos a representarlos sin costo cuando son aprehendidos por la agencia, dice John Pogash, coordinador nacional juvenil del SIN.

Para que se le otorgue asilo, una persona debe demostrar que es perseguida políticamente, lo cual parece sencillo pero es tan confuso como tratar de interpretar el código de impuestos, dicen los abogados de inmigración. La ley federal, que se basa en la Convención de las Naciones Unidas sobre Refugiados, señala que una persona debe demostrar que es perseguida por cuestiones de raza, religión, nacionalidad, creencias políticas o asociación con un grupo determinado.

En el caso de los niños, esto es particularmente difícil de probar porque son demasiado jóvenes para comprender las circunstancias en que se encuentran, ya no digamos explicarlas a otros, dice Young, abogado y representante en Washington de la Comisión Femenina para Mujeres y Niños Refugiados.

Tres categorías Lang, cuya oficina está en Harlingen, Texas, divide en tres categorías a los niños que entran solos al país: los que desean regresar de inmediato a sus hogares, los que tienen familia en Estados Unidos, y los que podrían solicitar asilo por razones propias. Los abogados que trabajan sin costo (ad honorem) se centran en esta última categoría.

La campaña para que se otorgue asesoría legal para los jóvenes en busca de asilo, ocurre en momentos en que el Congreso se prepara para debatir nuevas leyes de inmigración. Aún no se ha presentado una iniciativa de ley que establezca el derecho a asesoría legal para los niños que ingresan ilegalmente a Estados Unidos, pero personal del Congreso dice que el tema está siendo discutido por algunos legisladores.

Los que se oponen a esto arguyen que los dólares de los contribuyentes estadounidenses no deben ser utilizados para ayudar a estos jóvenes inmigrantes ilegales, y que hay muy poca información acerca del problema como para discutir las soluciones.

"Pedir a los contribuyentes que financien un cheque en blanco es un cambio sumamente radical (de la política actual de inmigración) y potencialmente muy costoso para dedicarlo a algo que puede estar contribuyendo a actividades del crimen organizado", dice Dan Stein, director ejecutivo de la Federación para la Reforma de la Inmigración Estadounidense. Algunos de los niños quizá estén siendo utilizados por adultos como inductores de drogas, explica.

Las cifras del desamparo Más de 5,300 niños ingresaron ilegalmente a Estados Unidos el año pasado, según los registros del SIN. Más de 1,300 de los niños fueron detenidos durante un período promedio de 32 días en refugios y centros de detención juvenil, una práctica que ha sido criticada por Young y otros. La mayoría de los que están bajo custodia, generalmente adolescentes, ingresó sola al país.

Mientras sus casos son resueltos, los niños bajo custodia del SIN son colocados en refugios, o en hogares adoptivos o en correccionales para jóvenes, muchos de los cuales se encuentran en estados fronterizos.

La Comisión Femenina para Mujeres y Niños Refugiados ayudó al SIN a desarrollar nuevos lineamientos para el trato hacia los niños que buscan asilo. El asunto ha adquirido importancia para los grupos pro reforma de inmigración, en momentos en que los niños se han convertido en la mayoría de los que buscan asilo en el mundo.

Un estudio de las Naciones Unidas llegó a la conclusión de que, tan sólo en la década anterior, las guerras y disturbios habían causado la muerte de 2 millones de niños, dejado incapacitados a 4 ó 5 millones, y des-

samparados a otros 12 millones. Muchos niños, como Oscar, un hondureño de 15 años, llegan a Estados Unidos para escapar de la vida callejera de sus países natales. Oscar, quien es huérfano, era rutinariamente golpeado por pandillas y oficiales policiales, según los abogados que lo representaron en las audiencias de asilo.

El muchacho, cuyo nombre completo no se revela para proteger su identidad, huyó repetidamente de casas adoptivas y refugios antes de que el SIN lo enviara a centros juveniles de detención en el Condado Liberty, Texas, y en San Diego, California.

Recientemente, sin embargo, recibió asilo y pronto podrá ser adoptado por una familia texana, poniendo fin así a su odisea de 18 meses dentro del sistema de inmigración de Estados Unidos.

Pero este final feliz es la excepción de la regla, dicen sus defensores. Muy pocos de los niños que entran solos al país reciben asilo, y menos aún son adoptados, dicen. En esto, como en otros renglones, las cifras distan mucho de ser claras.

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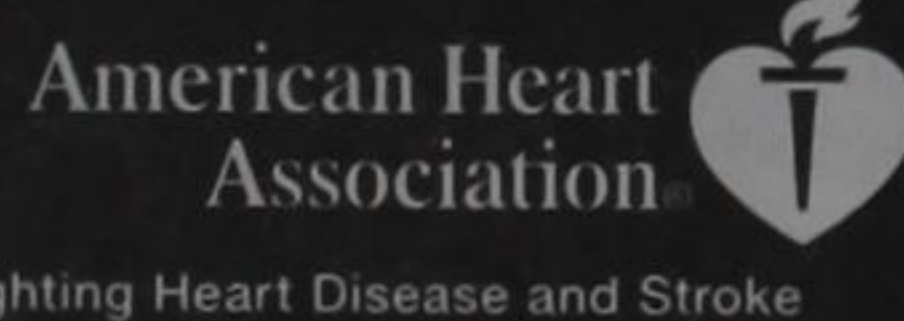
Harmon Report

**Seattle 21, San Diego 9
The Chargers were riding high in October when they beat the Seahawks 13-10 on John Carney's last-second field goal and took over the AFC West lead. Lately S.D.'s offense barely has a pulse.

**Tampa Bay 16, Detroit 14
Despite outgaining the Lions and holding the ball nine minutes longer six weeks ago, the Buccaneers lost to Detroit for the third time in a row, 20-3. T.B. will win this one with defense.

**Washington 26, Arizona 13
Paced by Champ Bailey's three interceptions -- one returned 59 yards for a TD -- the Redskins beat the Cardinals 24-10 in Week 6. Arizona can slow Washington's receivers, but not its runners.

Podría ser el músculo conocido como tu corazón. Lo cierto es que el dolor en un brazo, especialmente junto con dolores en el pecho, náuseas y mareos, puede indicar el comienzo de un ataque al corazón y la necesidad de obtener ayuda inmediata. Para saber más, visítanos en www.americanheart.org o llama al 1-800-AHA-USA1.



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Por Pastor: Frank García
Lubbock, Texas



¿QUE ES EL HOMBRE?

La contestación a esta pregunta, depende mucho de a quién se le pregunte. Por ejemplo, si le preguntamos a un médico, él nos diría que el hombre es un ser que se compone de huesos y nervios, y un sinúmero de tejidos. Pero si le preguntamos a un comerciante qué es el hombre? El nos diría que el hombre es o debe ser un inteligente, quizá un poco oportuno; con poca verdad y mucha mentira. Pero si le preguntamos a un vicioso él nos diría que el hombre es uno que sabe gozar de la vida, uno que no lo manda la señora, o uno que sabe entrar y salir cuando él quiere, que sabe tener amigos, y que no se lamenta de la mala suerte, o que no se lamenta cuando cae en la cárcel. Y así sucesivamente, si le preguntamos a varias personas tendríamos varias diferentes contestaciones. Pero que si le preguntamos a quién lo hizo, a Dios: El nos contestaría muy diferente. Dios hizo al hombre, y Dios sabe quién es el hombre. En la Biblia 1 Tesalonicenses 5:23 Dios nos dice que el hombre es espíritu alma y cuerpo. Esos son los hombres. En primer lugar, los hombres son los que saben ser justos y obedientes a Dios y a sus deberes. Porque así los crió Dios. El hombre creado por Dios fue capacitado para toda buena obra. Dios le dio la responsabilidad de cuidar de un jardín, y guardar su mandamiento, que entonces era uno: "No comeras del árbol" También para poner nombre a los animales y para que cuidara de Eva, (ese fue el trabajo más difícil.) También para que reinara sobre todo lo creado. Por lo que vemos, que fue capacitado por Dios para que llevara toda responsabilidad como hombre. Pero la Biblia sigue diciendo que el hombre descuidó, y cayó de la gracia de Dios. Y que Dios lo desocupó por causa de la señora, y que Dios lo despidió del jardín por no haber calificado para el trabajo. ¡Cuidado! Y Gén. 3:24. nos dice: "Echó pues fuera al hombre, y puso al oriente del huerto de Edén querubines, y una espada encendida que se removía a todos lados, para guardar el camino de la vida" Y aunque ya no era el mismo hombre que Dios había creado, pero siguió usando el mismo nombre. Y desde entonces...El hombre tiene muchos nombres. Y fue aquí donde ha adquirido su más adecuado apellido: "Carnal." Y dijo Jehová: "No contendrá mi espíritu en el hombre para siempre porque ciertamente él es carnal." Gén. 6:3. Y desde entonces su nombre ha sido hombre carnal. Y a tal grado se hizo el hombre carnal, que cuando Dios le preparó un arca de salvación, no quiso entrar. (Bueno, todavía algunos no quieren entrar) En Gén. 4:11, el hombre se sacó un TROFEO por salir victorioso sobre su hermano; el trofeo tenía el nombre de "Maldito" ¡CUIDADO!

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News Briefs

U.S. Signs Agreements to Reinforce War on Drugs

Bogota, Dec 2 (EFE).- The U.S. and Colombian governments signed a new agreement Wednesday to reinforce the war on drug trafficking in the latter's Pacific and Atlantic ports, said Colombian police officials.

The agreement, which will require the investment of one million dollars, was signed by the Colombian police chief, Gen. Rosso Jose Serrano, and by the U.S. ambassador to Colombia, Curtis Kamman.

Serrano said, "We have practically reached our goal of controlling the ports," and he added that U.S. customs officials and other U.S. agencies have collaborated with Colombia since last year in "exchanging information."

"We have carried out important operations. In Cartagena, for example, in the last six months we confiscated nearly 27 tons of cocaine," Serrano said.

"When we have control of all the ports there will be fewer drugs and fewer chemical precursors," he added.

Gen. Serrano called for international cooperation in combating cocaine and heroin shipments traveling to the United States by way of Central American countries.

Windy City's Puerto Ricans to Unite in Civil Disobedience

Chicago, - Various Puerto Rican community leaders in Chicago announced Monday that they will travel to Puerto Rico next weekend to lend their support to protests calling for the U.S. Navy's withdrawal from Vieques Island.

The delegation will meet with representatives from the organizations that are carrying out a campaign of civil disobedience on Vieques to define their role in the crusade against the Navy's presence on the island.

Roberto Maldonado, from Cook County, Illinois's Eighth District, said the unity of the Puerto Rican community and the firmness of the peaceful civil disobedience movement will have the greatest effect on the permanent withdrawal of the U.S. military from Vieques.

Maldonado said he is prepared to travel to Vieques to join the civil disobedience movement when the time for new demonstrations approaches.

At the same time, Chicago city councilman Billy Ocasio said that he and other Puerto Rican community leaders from New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and Washington "have our tickets ready to travel to the island and join the protests when it is necessary."

On Friday, U.S. President Bill Clinton authorized the resumption of live-fire exercises in mid-March 2000, although he cancelled the exercises scheduled for this month by the aircraft carrier "Eisenhower" and its support vessels.

After receiving a detailed report prepared by the Pentagon, Clinton announced the implementation of a plan to withdraw the U.S. Navy from Vieques over the next five years, "unless the people of the island of Vieques decide to continue the relationship."

The delegation that will travel to Puerto Rico will also include the participation of Rep. Luis Gutierrez (Dem.-IL), who criticized Clinton's decision adding that it was an attempt to "cynically silence critics and manipulate and immobilize the opposition to the Navy remaining on Vieques."

"My frustration is so great because this announcement is, de facto, a decision by the Pentagon and not the result of a determination reached by the president," Gutierrez said in a statement.

In a clear reference to dozens of Puerto Ricans carrying out peaceful acts of civil disobedience on the Naval base on Vieques, Gutierrez urged the people of Puerto Rico "to remain united and continue exercising their right to free expression and assembly."

Denver Hispanic Businesses Prepare for New Century

Denver.- A group of Mexican businessmen in Denver have devised "a joint growth strategy for the next century" aimed at the exchange of resources, consultation of experts and organization of workshops.

Most of these 40 entrepreneurs arrived in the United States following the 1994 devaluation of the Mexican peso, and for that reason are still learning English and are unfamiliar with many aspects of the U.S. way of life.

Mexican businessmen are currently benefiting from a program in Spanish, sponsored by the Small Business Administration (SBA) and Small Companies of Guadalupe, which as of January 2000, will start giving classes in English, citizenship, computers, legal counseling and business leadership.

"Until now we can only talk about our own activities, offer our own programs and conduct our own polls," said Small Businesses of Guadalupe Director Felipe Lopez.

"It is time to create awareness of Hispanic contributions to the Denver economy," he added.

An example of Hispanic entrepreneurship in Denver is Santiago Ochoa, from Colima, Mexico, who arrived in the city three years ago with only 50 dollars, sold food on the streets and now after years of effort and sacrifice, plans to open a second restaurant.

The "existential frustration of turning 40 and not having achieved anything" led Ochoa to cook shrimp and sell them on the streets of Denver. "Now that I have my own thing, it is time to help others to prevent them from going through what I went through," Ochoa said.

The Mexican businessmen aim to get successful entrepreneurs such as Ochoa to promote an economic development agenda with the support of organizations such as the SBA, the Denver Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and Small Companies of Guadalupe.

Regional SBA Director Jeff Sigfried said that over the past five years, between 4,000 and 7,000 new Hispanic businesses have opened in Denver. "I think it is all right if Hispanics first want to start a business and then learn English. That's what we are here for," he said.

The SBA estimates that Hispanic business in the United States have grown some 230 percent between 1987 and 1997, accounting for 1.4 million businesses with an annual turnover of 184 billion dollars.

The entrepreneurship of the Mexicans has made possible for citizenship and English classes to be held together at area community centers.

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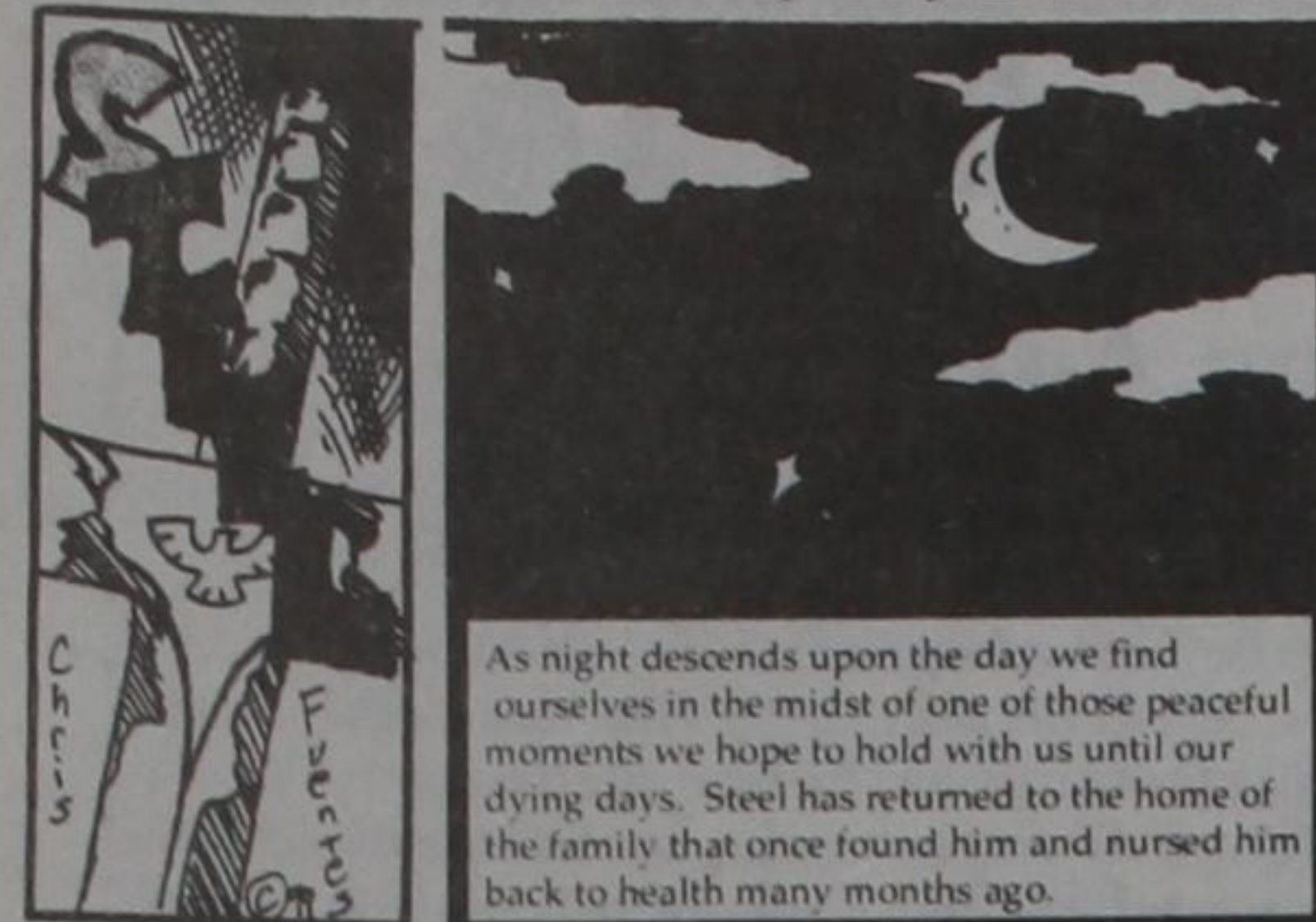
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As night descends upon the day we find ourselves in the midst of one of those peaceful moments we hope to hold with us until our dying days. Steel has returned to the home of the family that once found him and nursed him back to health many months ago.



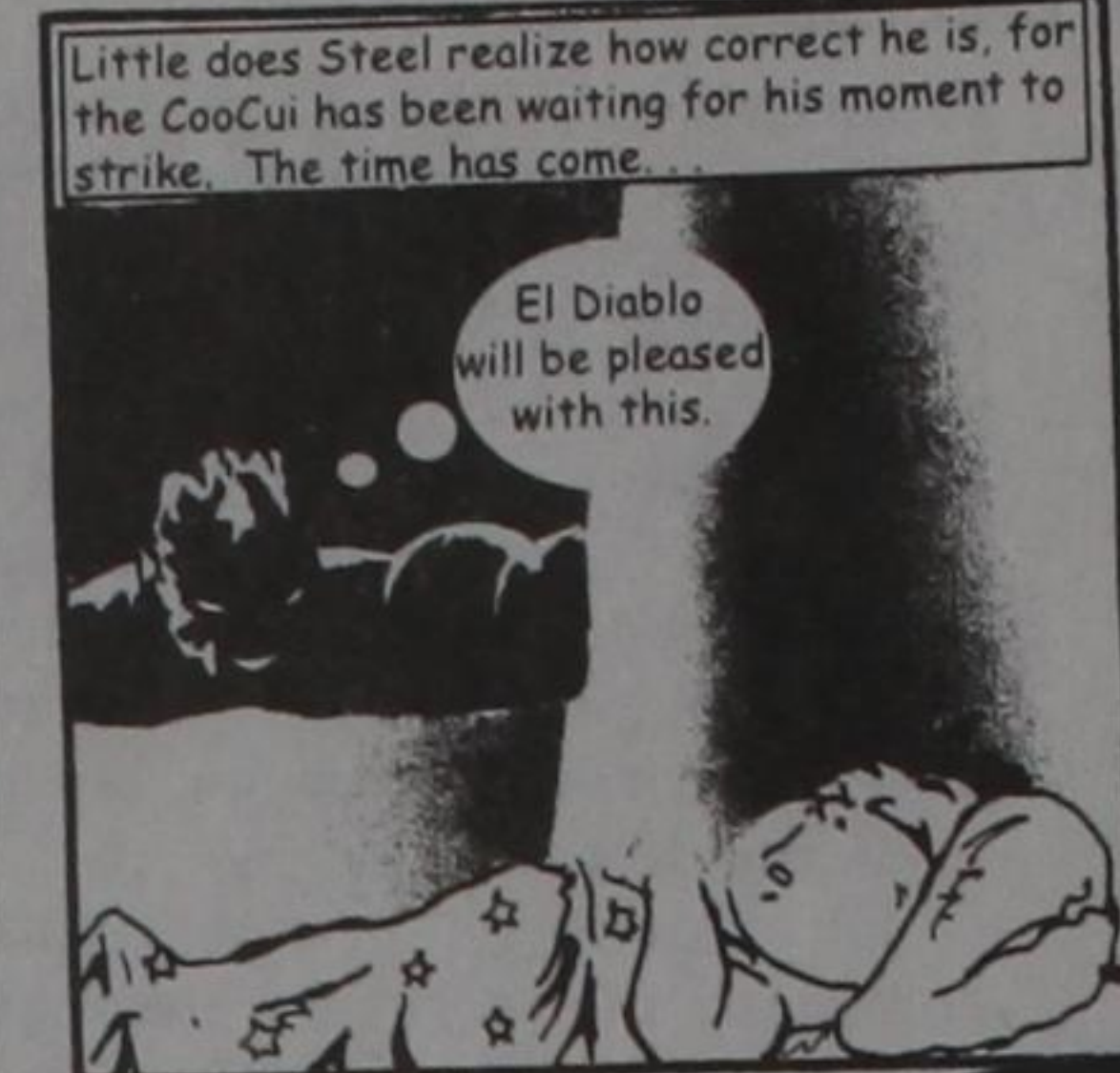
Nana, do I haf' ta go to bed right now? I told you I'm not sleepy.
It's been a long day, sweetie. You need your rest, 'kay?
'kay. But I'm not tired.



Hush now! You want the CoCo! to hear you and come get you in the middle of the night?!! Now go to sleep child.



She should be asleep soon. I can't thank you enough for remembering her. Since her father passed away she hasn't really had any role models.
It was my pleasure, but I'm afraid I'll have to leave in the morning. I have this feeling that it's not safe for you if I stay any longer.



Little does Steel realize how correct he is, for the CoCo! has been waiting for his moment to strike. The time has come.
El Diablo will be pleased with this.

Declaracion De Victoria En La Guerra De Asimilacion De Los Estados Unidos

¿Quién está asimilando a quién? Esa debería ser la primera pregunta demográfica para los Estados Unidos a medida que se adentren en el nuevo milenio. Con la clausura del siglo XX, los Estados Unidos deberían retirar su proverbial "división de razas". La cultura hispana no está derriéndose.

Un reciente episodio en el medioeste -- que no fué una vista bonita -- afirmó eso vívidamente. Un jugador de fútbol extremadamente grande, de la universidad de Kansas, visitó a un "Taco Bell" local, dio su orden y condujo alrededor hacia la servidumbre. Cuando descubrió que faltaba una "chalupa" en su orden, acometió al dependiente y terminó atascado en el marco de la ventana. Se necesitó de una cuadrilla de emergencia de la ciudad para sacarlo de allí.

Cada vez en mayor medida, la sociedad estadounidense está abrazando las características latinas. Está sucediendo en todas partes.

La música hispana se halla ahora en la cúspide de los cuadros populares. Los ritmos y las canciones -- tanto en inglés como en español -- de las estrellas tales como Gloria Estefan, Ricky Martin, Jennifer López, Marc Anthony y otros está cautivando a los fanáticos de la corriente principal. Como los Sinatra de ayer, estamos hasta edificando dinastías familiares. No hace mucho, era Julio Iglesias quien hacía desmayarse a las audiencias estadounidenses. Ahora es su hijo Enrique.

Desde que la salsa llegó a ser el condimento No. 1 de los Estados Unidos en 1992, el "chilé" ha borrado casi por completo a la palabra "chilí" de nuestro vocabulario. Chiles rojos y verdes -- en las pizzas, en las panes "bagels", bajo las hamburguesas -- son lo acostumbrado en estos días. En Española, Nuevo México, un restaurant llamado "Pizza Loca" atrae a las multitudes al dar a la comida italiana un sabor hispano distintivo.

El español ha sido parte del idioma de este país durante largo tiempo. Los nombres de estados, ciudades, ríos, plantas, animales y ahora hasta los hogares para jubilados para los angloparlantes monolingües atestiguan la influencia hispana en la vida diaria.

Las nuevas palabras del español y el "spanglish" están infiltrándose en nuestro vocabulario diariamente. Vale la pena apuntar que algunos de los defensores más apasionados de la educación bilingüe son los padres no hispanos que ven el valor de que sus hijos hablen español además de inglés. Y, ¿por qué no? Es el idioma primordial que se habla en las Américas.

Cuando fui a San Diego hace poco, mi compadre Abrán nos llevó, a mi hija y a mí, a un restaurante popular dirigida por una chicana que se enamoró de un griego. Se casaron y la pareja creó un plato famoso localmente, al que se llama un "steerburger" -- una hamburguesa grande, jugosa, cubierta por rodajas de cordero. Puesto que los españoles trajeron ganado vacuno y ovejuno a este hemisferio, yo digo que podemos tomarnos el crédito por este plato.

Mi hija me presentó a otro restaurante popular, donde una especialidad es una "quesadilla" de mantequilla de maní y jalea. Los tacos de camarones y pescado han pertenecido a la corriente principal durante largo tiempo. Los chicharrones "bajos en grasa" pueden sonar como una contradicción, pero están haciéndole competencia con las papitas fritas en algunos lugares. Las "fajitas" de carne de res, las de pollo y las de mariscos están llegando a ser comunes en los comedores no hispanos. En casi cualquier ciudad del país, su camarero recomendará una cerveza Corona o una "margarita".

El "bolillo" mexicano se parece a un panecillo francés. Si usted no lo ha probado -- especialmente el de corteza dura -- se está perdiendo un bocado de lei-

tos. En mi estado natal de Nuevo México vienen apareciendo una creciente cantidad de panaderías.

El mejor "bolillo" está en una panadería donde los clientes hacen largas filas para esperar que este tipo de pan salga de los hornos.

Desgraciadamente, no puedo recomendárselo a ustedes, porque es de propiedad de un panadero militante parecido en Albuquerque al dueño loco de un lugar de sopas popularizado en las serie de televisión "Seinfeld" en Nueva York. Ponga a prueba a cualquier panadería con los bolillos o el pan dulce. Usted no querrá comer otra cosa.

Los genes hispanos están influyendo hasta sobre las tácticas de la policía. Leí hace poco que un instructor de capacitación de la policía en Massachusetts estaba recomendando que su clase use una dosis alta del llamador "pepper spray" al tratar de sojuzgar a los detenidos latinos, porque éstos tienen una tolerancia genética al capsaicin, el ingrediente principal que le da el pique a los chiles. El capsaicin se usa también en las pomadas para aliviar músculos adoloridos; es útil, sin duda, después de los encuentros con estos policías.

El chile tiene más que un valor nutritivo y terapéutico. Se ha probado científicamente que es eficaz para repeler al comején, algo que es bastante escaso aquí en Nuevo México, donde el chile es, en verdad, nuestro tesoro estatal.

Como los frijoles olorosos sobre una tortilla humeante, la vibrante cultura latina continúa propagándose por todos los 50 estados.

Asimilación, ¡sí! Pero, ¿en qué dirección?

(José Armas escribe sobre asuntos hispanos en "The Albuquerque Tribune".)

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them down with a Corona beer or a margarita.

The Mexican bolillo resembles a French roll. If you haven't tried it -- especially the hard-crust bolillo -- you're missing a delectable treat. An increasing number of panaderías/bakeries are popping up in my home state of New Mexico. The best bolillo is at a panadería where people stand in long lines waiting for the bread to come out of the oven.

Unfortunately, I can't recommend it to you because it's commandeered by a militant baker who is Albuquerque's equivalent of Jerry Seinfeld's New York "Soup Nazi." Try any panadería for bolillos or for pan dulce/sweet bread. You'll be hooked.

Hispanic genes are even influencing police tactics. A short time ago I read that a police training instructor in Massachusetts was recommending that his class use extra doses of pepper spray when subduing Latinos because they have a built-in tolerance to capsaicin, the miracle ingredient that gives chiles their hot spike. Capsaicin is also used in heating balms to relieve sore muscles; useful, no doubt, after encounters with those cops.

Chile has more than nutritional and therapeutic value. It has been proved effective in repelling termites, which are quite scarce here in New Mexico, where chile is our de facto state treasure.

Like fragrant frijoles on a steaming tortilla, the vibrant Latino culture continues to spread across the 50 states. Assimilation, sí! But in which direction?

(José Armas writes on Hispanic issues for The Albuquerque Tribune.)

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Declaring Victory In the U.S. Assimilation War

By José Armas

Who's assimilating whom? That should be the first demographic question for the United States as it enters the new millennium. With the close of the 20th century, the U.S. should permanently retire its proverbial "melting pot." Hispanic culture is not melting.

A recent episode in the Midwest made the point vividly, and it was not a pretty sight. A very, very large Kansas university football player visited a local Taco Bell, placed his order and drove around to the pickup window. When he discovered a chalupa was missing from his "Mexican" meal, he lunged at the server and ended up stuck in the window frame. It took a city emergency crew to free him.

More and more, society is embracing Latino attributes. It's happening everywhere. Hispanic music now sits atop the pop charts. The rhythms and songs -- in both English and Spanish -- of such stars as Gloria Estefan, Ricky Martin, Jennifer López, Marc Anthony and others are captivating mainstream fans. Like the Sinatras of yore, we're even building family dynasties. Not long ago, it was Julio Iglesias who had U.S. audiences swooning. Now it's son Enrique.

Since salsa became the No. 1 U.S. condiment in 1992, chile has all but erased the word "chili" from our lexicon. Red and green chile -- on pizzas, in bagels, under hamburgers -- is standard fare these days. In Española, N.M., a Pizza Loca restaurant draws crowds by giving Italian food a distinct Hispanic

flavor.

Spanish has been part of this country's language for a long time. The names of states, cities, rivers, plants, animals and even retirement homes for monolingual English-speakers attest to Hispanic influence in everyday life.

New Spanish/Spanglish words are infiltrating our vocabulary daily. It's noteworthy that some of the most passionate defenders of bilingual education are non-Hispanic parents who see the value of their children speaking Spanish in addition to English. And why not? It's the primary language spoken in the Americas.

When I visited San Diego recently, my compadre Abrán took me and my daughter to a popular restaurant run by a chicana who fell in love with a Greek. They married, and the combo created a locally famous dish called a steerburger -- a great, juicy hamburger topped with slices of lamb. Since the Spanish brought cattle and sheep to this hemisphere, I say we take credit for this plate.

My daughter introduced me to another popular restaurant where one specialty is a peanut butter-and-jelly "quesadilla."

Shrimp and fish tacos have long been mainstreamed. Low-fat chicharrones/pigskins may sound like a contradiction in terms; they rival potato chips in some quarters. Beef, chicken and seafood fajitas are becoming commonplace in non-Hispanic eateries. And in just about any city in the country, your server will recommend that you wash

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