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Immigrants offer a solution to America's problems

Among the more promising candidates nominated Monday for President-elect Barack Obama's Cabinet was Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano, who was named for secretary of Homeland Security.

She was a good choice, not only for her wisdom as a border state leader but also because she seems to get that an educated workforce is the key to economic strength.

The one time I heard Napolitano speak in person, she pounded home her view that America needs to seize a "Sputnik moment."

That is, we need to grasp how far behind the rest of the world our students are falling in educational achievement in technology, the sciences and math. I agree. We are at the beginning of a painful national reality check, and the time to act is now.

Under the Obama administration, the secretary of Homeland Security will be well positioned to encourage the necessary shifts in attitude, so that policy begins to match some of our nation's most cherished beliefs about ourselves. Such as that we are "a nation of immigrants" and the "land of opportunity."

Let's leave aside for the moment the passionate feelings about immigrants who are among us illegally and consider some facts outlined in a new report by the Migration Policy Institute.

For instance: "About one in three immigrants is a person with either a U.S. or foreign college degree." So much for the image of huddled undereducated masses slipping across borders. One in six members of America's 130 million-person labor force came to our shores an immigrant.

In 2007, 15 percent of all college graduates in the U.S. labor force were immigrants. Of the 6.5 million college-educated foreign born, one-third arrived in the last 10 years.

About 18 percent of college-educated immigrants were of Latino descent.

And here is the statistic that ought to embarrass U.S. citizens by birth: College-educated immigrants are more likely than native-born graduates to achieve postgraduate degrees. And they are far more likely to be educated in high-tech, science or engineering — all areas vital to sustaining the nation in the future.

If Napolitano takes the helm at Homeland Security, the agency that handles immigration, she will have the power to make the most of what these immigrants can offer.

Time will be on her side. Obama will have plenty of other seas to calm before any real overhaul of immigration law can occur. It's unlikely to happen in his first year in office.

But that just might give Napolitano the time to pursue the difficult work of changing public perception about what immigrants offer. They ought to be viewed not as competitors but as stimulators to the economy.

Bill Gates understands that fact. Along with other CEOs, he hounded Congress earlier this year to increase the numbers of highly educated immigrants allowed entry into the U.S. In 2007, the 65,000 visas allowed for this group of immigrants were spoken for within the first four months of the fiscal year.

The denied immigrants could have become catalysts and coworkers of native-born people. Consider this other fact from the report: More than 1.3 million college-educated immigrants were underutilized in the U.S. labor market in 2005-2006.

Meaning, many of those who are here are not being used to the best of their abilities.

And you can bet that means the trickle-down job creation that comes from the highly educated and motivated classes did not occur. That hurts U.S.-born people as well, including those sons and daughters who have long forgotten or never knew that their teen immigrant forefathers did not speak perfect English.

Every economic downturn in U.S. history has produced a backlash against the most recent immigrant arrivals. But maybe this time it can be different.

America needs more than ever to retool itself for future economic growth. Immigrants are a source of innovation and inspiration that can help us rebound — just as they always have been.

Covenant Health System to receive \$100,000 donation in toys



LUBBOCK - Covenant Health System is pleased to announce the Callaway family from Roswell, NM, will donate toys for the eighth consecutive year to Covenant Children's Hospital on Thursday, Dec. 18 at 1 p.m.

This year marks a new record of \$100,000 worth of donations to Covenant Children's Hospital by

the Callaway Family. Each year since 2001, the Callaways and their friends generously donate toys, electronics, pajamas, and other supplies. Covenant Children's Hospital in honor of their daughter Lindsey. Lindsey Callaway is remembered as a kind and soft-spoken girl who was just 16 years old when she died of a brain

tumor she fought for three years.

"Every child should have something to look forward to each holiday season, and the Callaways always find a way to make this happen for our pediatric patients," said Stephanie Thompson, child life specialist at Covenant Children's Hospital. "This is a wonderful way to honor Lindsey's memory."

Dallas Lawmaker Alonzo Joins Lawmakers to Denounce Latest DPS New Rules for Driver's Licenses

Today, Texas State Representative Roberto R. Alonzo joined a number of legislative colleagues and members from various key organizations across the state that converged in Austin to denounce two of the latest rules recently adopted by the Texas Public Safety Commission (PSC) and the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) required to apply for or renew a driver's license in Texas. While it is not uncommon for DPS to adopt rules and regulations for the issuance and renewal of driver licenses in Texas, what is unique about these two latest rules are the targeted population and unintended consequences that will result from them in the long run. The new rules target primarily legal immigrants living in the state and are also riddled with unintended consequences, which are many, that could potentially end up wasting more taxpayer dollars than necessary. The first rule which was adopted in May 2008, requires all legal immigrants to renew their driver's licenses in person. The second rule which was adopted in October 2008, in essence creates a separate class or category of driver's licenses that are clearly marked "temporary visitor," for legal immigrants, and the license's duration lasts only as long as the holder's visa.



"The whole issue of immigration is and always has been a very complex issue that to this day is constantly being revised, reformed, and updated to keep with our changing political climate,

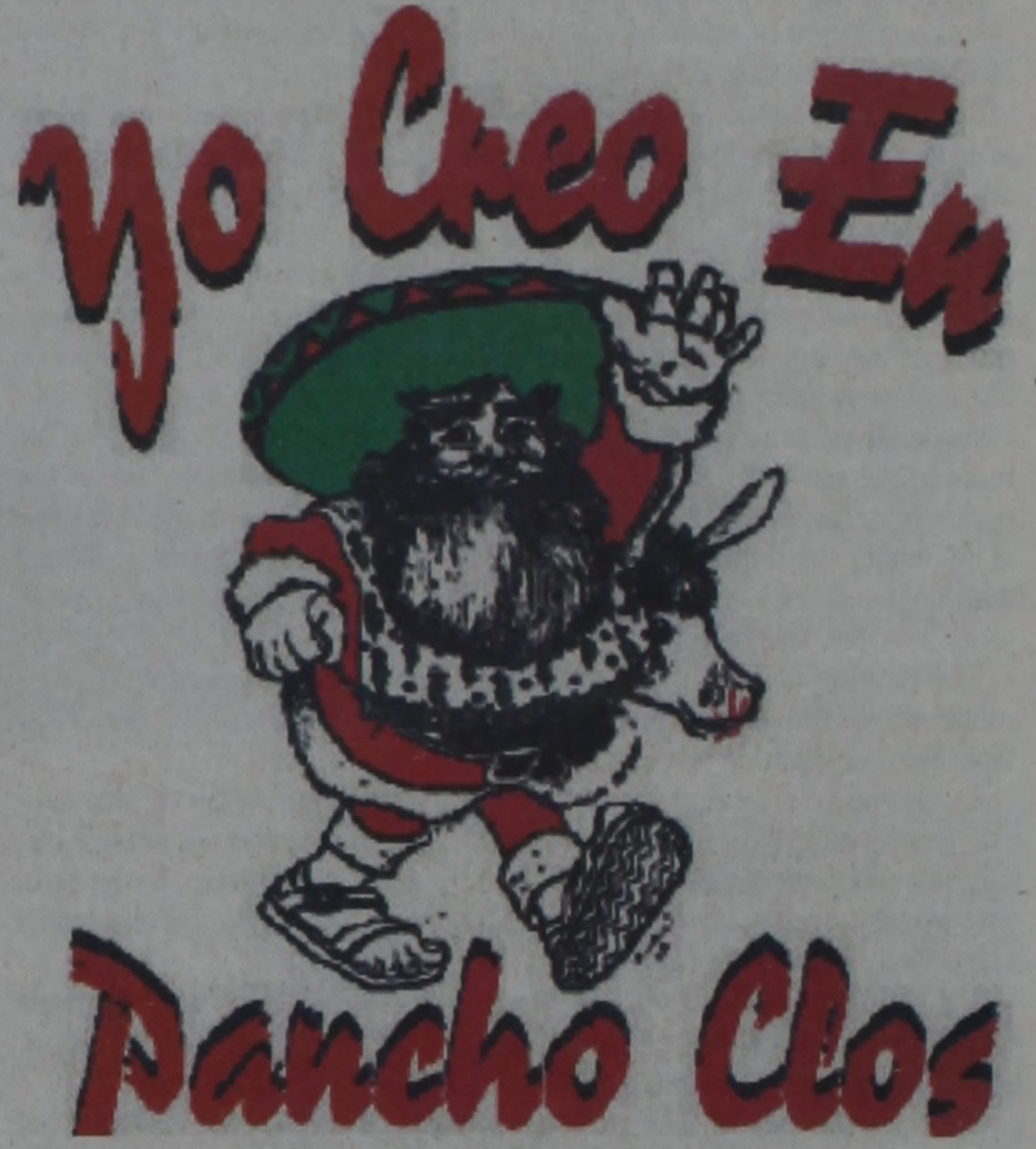
shifting world events, cultural demographics, and increasingly diverse population growth, not only in Texas, but all over the country. Even expert attorneys of immigration and naturalization law, trained personnel from our homeland security departments, and other key governmental agencies are constantly getting new training to learn more about this complex issue because it is so complex and changing so fast. The bottom line is plain and simple; the issue is a federal issue, not a state issue, and it should be left at that level where it can be handled best. I do not feel that our DPS state agency

should get into the business of enforcing federal law," said Rep. Alonzo.

"I am further disappointed that a state agency like DPS has taken it upon themselves to serve as immigration officials, homeland security experts, and most importantly, as enforcers of our federal immigration laws when in reality they do not have the knowledge, trained personnel, and expertise to undertake such complex role in our state. DPS needs to stick to its primary mission which is to provide public safety on our Texas roads and highways, and protect Texas citizens from harm, and not take over a federal role they are not capable and equipped to handle. The fact that DPS has established a new rule which will allow them to issue different licenses to different people and in different ways, is nothing more than racial profiling in disguise, outright discrimination, and more unnecessary wasted dollars we could be using elsewhere. It is simply opening up a Pandora's box filled with many problems, more wasted dollars, and potential lawsuits that we cannot afford, to say the least," stated Rep. Alonzo.

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Pancho Clos is Coming to Town



Pancho Clos will be arriving at Rogers park, Maggie Trejo Super Center, on December 21, 2008 at 2:00 pm. "Pancho Clos" would like to invite all the needy kids of the Lubbock community and the surrounding area to come and see him and let him know what they want for Christmas. The "Pancho Clos" project is sponsored by the American

G.I. Forum and is celebrating their thirty seventh anniversary since the origin of "Pancho Clos". the American G.I. Forum is a veterans non-profit organization. We would like to thank all those people and organizations and businesses who have helped us with this project throughout the years. for additional information, please call Robert Narvaiz at 781-6277.

Hispanic leaders urge for immigration reform

Hispanic leaders urged president-elect Barack Obama to issue a moratorium on immigration raids and deportations at a rally in Chicago Saturday.

"President-elect Barack Obama knows the immigration system is broken and we understand and believe he wants to fix it," said US Representative Luis Gutierrez.

"We're ready to create the political support, the grassroots support that (Obama) needs."

Despite the challenges he faces in dealing with two wars and an economic crisis, it appears as though Obama considers immigration reform a priority, Gutierrez said.

Gutierrez has spoken to Obama's chief of staff, Rahm Emanuel, four times in the past two weeks and will be meeting with Obama in the coming days to discuss the issue.

"We believe that as we go to the American people and we shatter the myths about our broken immigration system that one of the most powerful symbols we have is the sanctity of marriage ... and that government should not be destroying families" separating family members with deportations, Gutierrez said.

The US Congress failed to pass the most recent version of sweeping immigration legislation in 2007, which would have given legal status and a path to citizenship for the estimated



12 million illegal immigrants residing in the United States.

Obama had been involved in negotiations over the text and immigration reform earned broad support from both Obama and Republican rival John McCain on the 2008 campaign trail.

But in the final months before the election, immigration swiftly took a back seat to the deepening and more pressing economic crisis.

Immigration rights activists are planning a major march on Washington on January 21, the day after Obama is sworn in as the 44th US president, to call attention back to the issue.

Faith leaders across the country are also getting involved and are inviting families torn apart by deportations to speak to their congregations.

"It's time for a revolution," pastor Freddy Santiago told 1,500 people gathered at Re-bano Compañerismo Cristiano church in the heart of a mostly Hispanic Chicago neighborhood.

"Enough is enough! We will not allow our families to be separated or oppressed."

Yaritza Viveros, 13, sobbed as she spoke to the Chicago rally of her fears that she could come home from school to find her parents snatched in an immigration raid.

Viveros was born in the United States to undocumented parents and is a US citizen.

"I am young, and am against the terror from immigration," she told the crowd. "Many families are separated because of immigration and we have to stop the raids that destroy our families."

Brian Wilkins, whose family has lived in the United States for generations, also broke down as he spoke of he was forced to move to Buglaria because his wife and her family were being deported.

He said his father and brother in law are being held in a Wisconsin detention center like "criminals" when all they did wrong was pick bad lawyers.

"We as Americans should be able to have the family we love next to us," he said. "It's not just Hispanic people, it's all people who are being affected. Our broken laws should be fixed."

Guest Commentary

RICHARDSON AND 49,999,999

OTHER HISPANICS

By José de la Isla

WASHINGTON, D.C. — That Barack Obama named New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson as Secretary of Commerce-designate hardly comes as a surprise. The announcement was like his calling former Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker back into service.

In a role worthy of Richardson's talents, Obama's economic team seems to move toward getting the economy's fuel — credit — flowing again. Richardson's role will be to transform the old business economy into a new one.

Judging how Richardson led in New Mexico, and the not-so-minor green revolution he sparked, he will bring to the administration a tonic it lacks — success in building coherence.

But this new administration might be creating an insincerity gap. Richardson, the nation's lone Hispanic governor, is an offering to the nation and not completely a gesture to leaders reciprocating for the role Latinos played in the election. Even marching out the White House appointments of Cecilia Muñoz, a MacArthur fellow and VP at National Council of La Raza, to head Intergovernmental Affairs and Louis Caldera, former Secretary of the Army, as director of the White House Military Office looked like a clumsy attempt at appearing, instead of being, responsive.

Those Hispanics already doing transition work or identified for possible roles in the new administration have impressive credentials. One in the policy bunch is even a Nobel laureate. But the Obama team seems asleep at the wheel about this, giving the impression snobbery is more important than engagement — pretending they all did not attend the same prestigious schools, and finding difference in sameness.

The naming of Rahm Emanuel as chief of staff was possibly a pragmatic move. But still, he is the guy who warned Democrats to run away from the immigration issue in 2006.

At the time, 104 members of the House anti-immigration reform caucus were running amok and wanted to criminalize undocumented immigrants. Their antics not only slapped 50 million Hispanics in the face, they got us as a nation into a human rights mess promoting values against our own Constitution.

If Obama is going to posture himself as an FDR-type who counsels there's nothing for the public to fear but fear itself, then we have to recognize that confronted with fear, Emanuel told his colleagues to run.

The people spoke in 2006, and ten of those congressional zealots were defeated. And in 2008, two of their leaders, James Sensenbrenner and Tom Tancredo, decided not to run. Fourteen hard-line anti-immigration Republicans of that gang were voted out of office.

"Immigration" like "the economy" and "health care" are not just issues. They are bellwether values requiring sustained attention. They are measures by which we judge whether we have a decent, well-run nation. The negative lesson comes from the Bush administration, which went into intellectual and policy bankruptcy before the housing, banking and finance dominos fell.

Senate majority leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) said in late November that his chamber was taking up the difficult immigration and health care issues in the next session. This is sending a message.

So far, the Obama government lists immigration as just one among 24 issue categories on its website. This is not what priority attention looks like. What it needs to heed is 67.

That's the percentage of Latinos who voted for Obama. It's not that Obama owes them. It's that neither he, nor his people, can afford to snub them.

Now, put that ruggula in your pipe and smoke it [José de la Isla, author of "The Rise of Hispanic Political Power" (Arch Books 2003), writes weekly commentaries for Hispanic Link News Service. Email: joseisla3@yahoo.com.]

"It's not the thought that counts, it's the gift."

By Ysidro Gutierrez

It's Christmas and that means men everywhere are in extreme peril. Man is endowed with two inalienable survival instincts — the inclination to avoid the South Plains Mall and Wal-Mart. But alas, there is woman's expectation and man forevermore must set aside his primal fear of shopping and venture boldly into the aisles of indecision looking for the ideal Christmas Gift for his main girl.

Every year the ritual is repeated. And every year Christmas shopping for a gift for his sweetheart is the single biggest dilemma facing modern man. Man needs prudent counsel and the advice offered here is "For Men Only" and "Free"

The great mystery of Christmas shopping is that with thousands of items of merchandise to choose from and thousands of stores and the internet — why is buying a single gift such a life and death struggle?

It can't be because man's main girl is "the proverbial friend who has everything." It can't be for lack of time, money, good taste, good judgment — or could it?

This year — let it not be due to the absence of the essentials of choosing with ideas ranging from what to avoid and what is really bad. Here are my shopping tips for this Christmas. Consider these tips as medicine taken with a spoon full of sugar or a cold beer. (Note: Women should stop reading here. What follows is For Men Only)

The biggest mistake a man can make is to think like a man — avoid this above all else. Man thinking is dangerous. The ideal gift for a man would be a "New TV Remote" to replace the one thrown into the fireplace when the TTU Red Raiders lost to the Sooners. Man will risk being thrown into the fireplace himself if he bought a TV remote for his sweetheart no matter how thoughtful. Men must remember the ole adage from high school gym class — "It's not the thought

that counts; It's the gift."

Other things to avoid are electric drills or saws or car wash kits, or a new roaster pan. Men are often side-tracked by these treasurers when shopping. Needful things for the kitchen are definitely off the list especially if they are sharp or hard. The Perfect gift is to be found elsewhere.

Friends often suggest perfume as an ideal gift but, I strongly urge my brothers to avoid the perfume counter — you have no idea!!! For a man "Obsession" is the upstairs neighbor.

One suggestion is to look in your sweetheart's closet for a good idea — but avoid looking for ideas in your sweethearts drawers. Consider her favorite color too, but avoid lipstick!!! Lipstick is like perfume, it's best if she buys her own. And, lipstick can be a huge liability for men who have more than one friend on their Christmas list.

Another big "No, No" for men is to give her something you received last year especially if you haven't unwrapped it. She is bound to run into the person who gave it to you. This is an annual hazard for men. If you ignore all the above — please don't ignore this.

One popular idea these days is to buy your main girl a "Learn to Dance DVD." This is because of the popularity of TV's "Dancing with the Stars." I urge my fellow man to avoid this pitfall as well. If your girl learns to dance — she'll want you to take her dancing every weekend.

Whatever gift you get her. Make sure its wrapped by a professional. There is a third endowment natural to man — man was never meant to wrap Christmas gifts.

One more thing; don't wait until December 24th. Last minute shopping is one of those "Men Behaving Badly" things.

Have fun shopping. MERRY CHRISTMAS, AND GOD BLESS US EVERYONE

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Obama ignored Latinos for top posts

By Ruben Navarrette Jr.

Editor's Note: Ruben Navarrette Jr. is a nationally syndicated columnist and a member of the editorial board of the San Diego Union-Tribune. Read his column here

SAN DIEGO, California — About four years ago, I wrote a column praising President Bush for appointing Latinos to the Cabinet as he began his second term. The most obvious example was Bush's decision to nominate Alberto Gonzales as attorney general, which many liberals would insist was a big mistake.

I disagree. But that's an argument for another time.

This much can't be argued: Gonzales represented a major breakthrough. You see, all Cabinet posts are not created equal and, before Bush broke the barrier, no Latino had ever been nominated for one of the top four jobs — defense, state, treasury, or attorney general.

A whole succession of presidents — including Democrats such as Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton — who had munched nachos and posed with mariachis on the campaign trail, and enjoyed substantial support from Latinos, had somehow missed the opportunity to seat a Latino at the grown-ups' table. Imagine that.

In that column, I also mentioned Bush's decision to nominate Cuban-born Carlos Gutierrez to be commerce secretary. I had a line that read something like: "Commerce secretary isn't chopped liver."

A liberal reader who was obviously intent on denying Bush credit for anything positive wrote back, "Sorry, but commerce secretary is chopped liver."

I stand corrected.

Even liberals who like to think of the Gonzales appointment as a kind of failed social experiment because it lets them off the hook for future stabs at diversity would be hard-pressed to suggest that they couldn't do better and that Obama couldn't find a single Latino to name, oh I don't know, secretary of state.

You would have thought Bill Richardson was a shoo-in for that job, with his gold-plated resume: Seven-term member of Congress; special envoy to North Korea, Iraq, Cuba and Sudan; U.N. ambassador; energy secretary; New Mexico governor and five-time nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize for brokering cease-fires and negotiating the release of hostages. What a slacker. I'm surprised Richardson never got around to securing peace in the Middle East.

Let's not forget that Richardson is the highest-ranking Latino official in the country, and that Latinos supported Obama over John McCain by a margin of more than 2-to-1 and helped the Democrat win four battleground states.

Let's not forget that Richardson, a former member of the Clinton Cabinet, burned his bridges to the Little Rock Mafia by endorsing Obama in the primary over Hillary Clinton. CNN contributor James Carville likened Richardson to Judas.

Let's not forget that Richardson had the blessing of the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda, an association of 26 national and regional Hispanic civil rights and public policy organizations whose leaders sent a letter to President-elect Obama recommending Richardson for secretary of state.

Instead, this week, Obama gave the job that Richardson coveted to Hillary Clinton. And then, adding insult to injury, Obama nominated Richardson to be — wait for it — commerce secretary.

It's no wonder that, at the press conference where Obama announced Richardson's nomination, a Latino reporter asked the president-elect if this wasn't just an elaborate consolation prize. Obama insisted it wasn't, and that this was a very important job. What else could he say?

It gets worse. The gig is leftovers. According to CNN and other sources, Obama's first choice to head the commerce department was Penny Pritzker, the president-elect's chief fundraiser and a billionaire heir to the Hyatt hotel fortune who withdrew her name from consideration.

For someone who supposedly doesn't like drama, the president-elect has sure spun one juicy telenovela over who should serve in his Cabinet.

Don't misunderstand. Hillary Clinton didn't have Richardson's experience, but she might still make an extraordinary secretary of state. This isn't about Clinton and Richardson. It's about Obama and Richardson. It's about betrayal and humiliation and disappointment.

About all this, I don't know whether to be amused or angry. I could be amused because all those Latinos who supported Obama now have unos rancheros on their faces. But I suppose I should be angry that Obama has so little regard for America's largest minority that he would treat it disrespectfully.

Then again, it could have been worse. Legend has it that Obama's incoming Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel, another Clintonista, once sent a lobbyist with whom he was angry a dead fish. All Bill Richardson got was chopped liver.

The opinions expressed in this commentary are solely those of Ruben Navarrette.

HISPANIC STARS DO SOME HEAVY IMAGE-LIFTING

By Verónica Macías

Eighth in a series on leaders of national Hispanic organizations SKETCHBOX

Félix Sánchez is the Chief Executive Officer of TerraCom, a government and public relations firm in Washington, D.C., that offers an array of communications and event planning services. He also serves as the pro bono chairman of the National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts, which he co-founded in 1997 along with leading Hispanic actors. NHFA works toward expanding and presenting U.S. Latinos in a more contemporary manner, offering scholarships to Latino students and expanding career opportunities to Latino talent. (END SKETCHBOX)

Félix Sánchez's commitment to change mainstream media's image of this nation's 50 million Latinos in unwavering. He strives to transform the national montage of often-negative perceptions into one that reflects Hispanics' solid family values, sense of community, and industry.

While observing "there is no way we can truly control our image," Sánchez expresses his determination as NHFA chairman to shatter some stereotypes that have lingered too long.

To do so, he reaches out to next-generation Latino celebrities the likes of Eva Longoria-Parker, Adam Rodríguez, Zoe Saldaña, Michael Peña and Wilmer Valderrama to highlight their fame as a springboard to fresh profiles of "the contemporary Latino."

"We have to show the progress we've made. We have to show our sophistication," Sánchez says, adding that media magnates must recognize that audiences are prone to judge Hispanics by who and what they portray. "We must look at these images as vehicles to transport us forward."

Sánchez's sense of security and confidence was imbued at home. "My parents were fearless." His father was a barber who took pride in his job. Customers from varied stations in life came into his shop for his services. They came to his father, Sánchez makes the point. "And he always treated everyone with equal respect."

How does he expect to redefine the media industry's environment for Latinos?

By applying the same mantra he has applied to himself, he says, pointing out, "I never thought of myself as a minority until I went to the University of Texas." He recalls being one of only 150 Mexican Americans among 38,000 stu-

dents at UT-Austin. "Then I felt it in a very strong way."

Nevertheless, "because I had always gone to good schools and excelled academically, I didn't let them put me in a box. I've never thought there was something I couldn't do."

He graduated with honors from UT-Austin with a B.A. degree in psychology and an M.A. in early childhood development, then earned his law degree at the University of Houston's College of Law in 1980. After engaging in projects in Mexico City dealing with international copyright law and the Texas Secretary of State's elections division, Sánchez moved on to Washington, D.C., serving as legislative assistant to Senator Lloyd Bentsen of Texas until 1987.

Following seven years in congressional and government relations with the American Gas Association and the American Methanol Institute, he formed TerraCom. "I realized what I did was really communications. I was lobbying," he described his transition. "It wasn't really the industry per se. It was the skill set."

Active in both of Bill Clinton's presidential campaigns, Sánchez remembers, after holding a rally in San Antonio in 1996, being asked

by Jimmy Smits and Esaí Morales what they were actually accomplishing for the Latino community by embracing President Clinton. Sánchez realized there was no place for the quid pro quo — no exchange. The question was what could be developed to serve the community that would have reciprocal support from political allies?

The idea to create the National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts and address the issue of image flourished from there. Sánchez recalls fleshing out the concept with actor-friends Jimmy Smits and Esaí Morales. Along with actress Sonia Braga and Merel Juliá, they established the NHFA in 1997. "It was really a labor of love and passion," Sánchez says now. They agreed NHFA should provide a springboard to Hollywood for young and talented Latinos and Latinas. "What we could do is mentor this next generation, credential them and move them into the next realm of getting hired."

Since then, NHFA has awarded more than \$1 million in student scholarships and programs. This year it celebrated its 12TH annual Noche de Gala, recognizing new talent and helping transform the direction of the industry. "We're making a difference with television networks, bringing greater parity for Latinos," Sánchez claims.

He is optimistic about the future. "We're not going to be invisible any longer. Across the board, we will be a presence and a force to be reckoned with."

Despite their growing numbers and advances made in this country, Sánchez urges that Latinos from all across Latin America find a way to collaborate. "We are diverse within our own community. We have yet to formulate the elements that bring us under one umbrella."

A SPECIAL INFLUENCE The Texas native was raised in a Catholic family in San Antonio where his values were shaped by his parents and reinforced throughout his education by the religious nuns and brothers who educated him. "There was always a sense of

giving back, of connecting with the community. That was stressed in every school and parish. I saw and lived it. So I've always felt a need to connect." Today his dedication to the foundation is his way of giving back.

SOAPBOX

At 56 years old, Sánchez identifies several obsolete perceptions within the Latino community that hinder Hispanics from progressing. "We come from a social and historical perspective that unless you were fair-eyed and fair-haired, you couldn't flaunt being Latino. If you were more indigenous, more ethnic, there had been this 'I'm afraid to stand out for fear that somebody will take away what little I have achieved.'"

Those ideas are actually reversed in today's society, Sánchez contends. "The more that people are comfortable with their ethnicity and identity, the less it's an issue. You're not afraid of somebody seeing you as ethnic. People who hire you want to know you're comfortable with your identity. Now that we have a multicultural president, identity and culture are an important part of what people are seeking in new employees."

(Verónica Macías is a contributing columnist with Hispanic Link News Service. E-mail: veronica.macias@gmail.com) ©2008



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Homeowners Who Modified Loans in Trouble Again

More than half of all homeowners who had their loans modified to make the payments more affordable in the first half of the year are already in default again, banking regulators said Monday.

The new data raise questions about whether government money may be better spent on creating jobs, rather than averting foreclosures, said John Reich, director of the federal Office of Thrift Supervision office at a housing industry forum sponsored by his agency.

"I do have concerns about allocating federal resources," Reich said.

However, many experts claim the bulk of loan modifications don't actually provide much financial relief for borrowers.

The government's data don't include enough detail about the types of the loan modifications that were made, said Sheila Bair, chairman of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. "The quality of the (modifications) are not what they should be," she said.

The U.S. economic picture has darkened over the past

month. One in 10 Americans with a mortgage is either behind or in foreclosure, and more than 500,000 jobs were lost in November.

Unemployment stands at 6.7 percent, and the worldwide credit markets have only improved modestly from the freeze that led Congress to approve a \$700 billion bailout before the election.

Discussion on Monday's focused on how broad the government's intervention should be, rather than whether the government should play any role at all. The U.S. is on track for 2.25 million foreclosures this year.

"We need a bottom-up approach, in my view, by modifying people's mortgages and helping them stay in their homes," said New Jersey Gov. Jon Corzine.

Corzine called for a three to six month halt to foreclosures while the government works out a more aggressive plan.

Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's Economy.com, said the public is likely to be more sympathetic to efforts to assist troubled borrowers, because the link between the foreclosure

crisis and the sinking economy is increasingly clear in the midst of most Americans.

"It's now in every corner of the country," Zandi said. "I think that people understand that this is a broader issue."

During an interview that aired Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press," President-elect Barack Obama declined to say how large an economic stimulus plan he envisions. He said his blueprint for recovery will include help for homeowners facing foreclosure on their mortgages if President George W. Bush has not already acted when Obama takes office next month.

For nearly a year, some consumer advocates, lawmakers and think tanks have advocated a dramatic government response. The effort, they say, should be similar to created the Home Owners' Loan Corp. in 1933 to help borrowers refinance troubled home loans during the Great Depression. The Bush administration has focused mainly on voluntary industry efforts to modify loans, and those have not stopped the surge in foreclosures.

Obama Criticizes Bush's Slow Handling of Housing Crisis

Criticizing the White House directly for the first time since November's election, President-elect Barack Obama on Sunday accused President Bush of not doing enough to stem the nation's home foreclosure crisis.

Obama vowed that if the Bush administration doesn't take sufficient steps to help reduce foreclosures in its remaining days in office, he would take action shortly after being sworn in as the nation's 44th president on Jan. 20, 2009.

"I'm disappointed that we have not seen quicker movement on this issue by the administration," Obama told Tom Brokaw on NBC's "Meet the Press." "We have said publicly and privately that we want to see a package that helps homeowners, not just because it's good for that particular homeowner, it's good for the community."

Obama repeated his displeasure at a news conference in Chicago to introduce retired Army Gen. Eric Shinseki as his nominee to lead the Veterans Affairs Department.

"We have not seen the kind of aggressive steps in the housing market to stem foreclosures that I would like to see," he said, adding that his transition team has had discussions on the subject with the White House. "If it is not done during the transition, it will be done by me."

Bush administration officials responded that they're working hard to stem the foreclosure crisis through the Federal Housing Authority and the private sector. Administration officials say they've also bolstered Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

"There are no easy solutions to problems in the housing market, but we've taken aggressive action over the past year to deal with the housing downturn and to stop preventable foreclosures," said Cynthia Bergman, a White House spokeswoman. "And we continue to review options and new programs to help keep families in their homes and to help the housing market recover."

Obama's remarks Sunday were part of a whirlwind weekend in which he outlined his economic

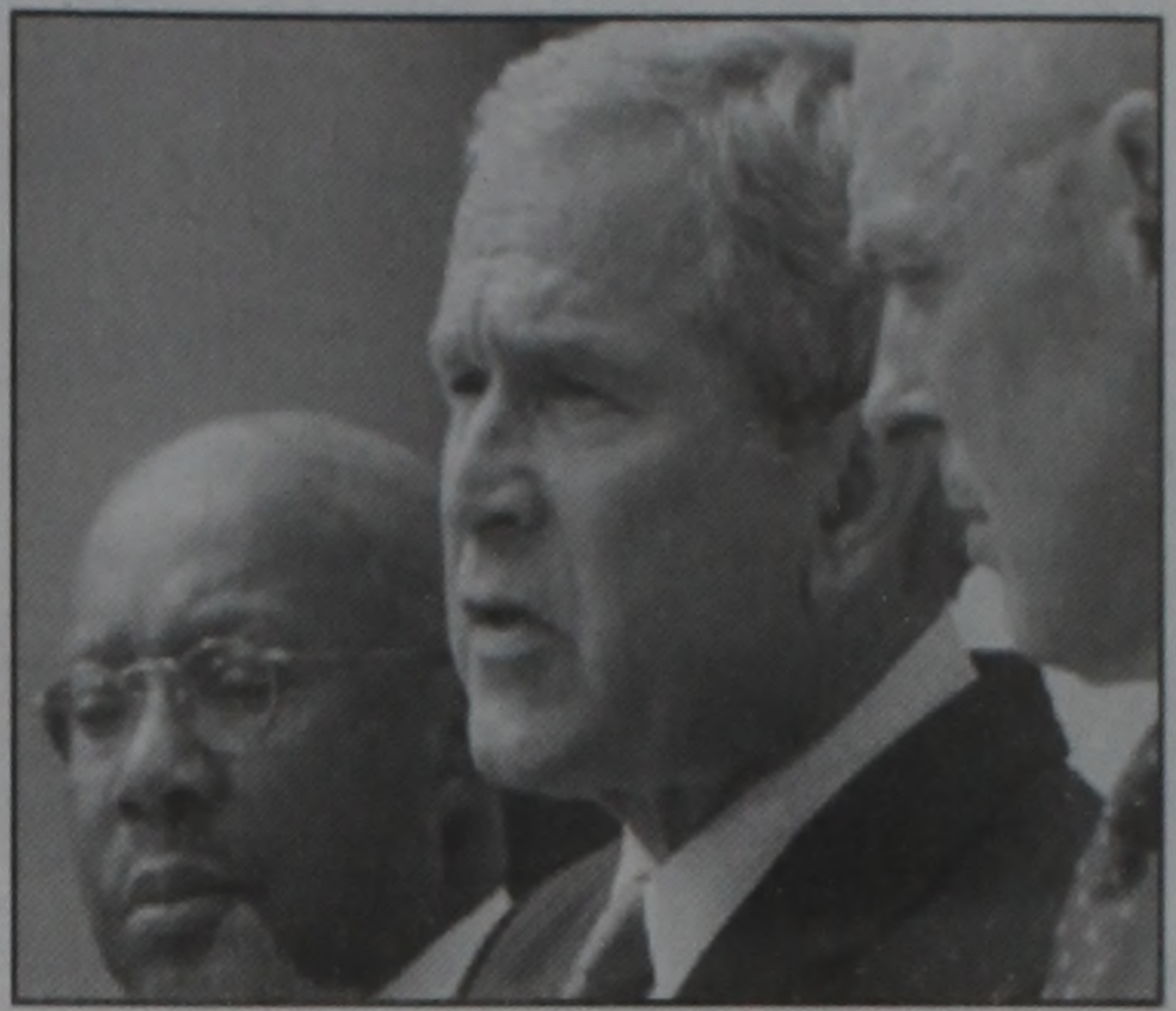
rescue package, offered support for Detroit's Big Three automakers and tapped Shinseki, who was forced to retire because of his harsh criticism of the original Iraq War invasion.

Obama said his economic team

saving Detroit and stabilizing Wall Street.

"The way we design this stimulus package, this economic recovery plan, is one that changes the way we do business," said Obama, who hasn't put a price tag on his plan. "We are not going to simply write a bunch of checks and let them be spent without some very clear criteria as to how this money is going to benefit the overall economy and put people back to work."

The ostensible reason for Obama's news conference was to continue to round out his



Gobernador de Illinois arrestado por corrupción

El gobernador de Illinois, Rod Blagojevich, fue arrestado ayer con los cargos de conspiración para vender o canjear al mejor postor el escaño en el Senado que dejó el presidente electo Barack Obama, parte de lo que los fiscales federales llamaron una "racha de delitos de corrupción política".

Blagojevich fue detenido en Chicago junto con su secretario de gobierno John Harris, precisó el vocero de la fiscalía federal, Randall Samborn. Posteriormente un juez federal ordenó dejar al gobernador demócrata en libertad, con la promesa de que se presentará de nuevo en la corte.

Los fiscales no acusaron a Obama de ningún delito. El presidente electo, de hecho, respondió que él no tuvo contacto con el gobernador ni con su oficina en torno al asunto. La magistrada Nan Nolan dijo "buenas tardes, gobernador", al recibir a Blagojevich en la audiencia de ayer en la tarde para fijarle fianza. El mandatario vestía pantalones deportivos, zapatos tenis y una camiseta.

Quedó en libertad después de firmar un documento que especifica una fianza de 4,500 dólares si no comparece ante el tribunal. También se le ordenó entregar su pasaporte y su identificación de propietario de un arma de fuego.

Blagojevich también fue acusado de amenazar ilegalmente con retener la ayuda estatal a la firma Tribune Co., dueña del diario Chicago Tribune, en un intento por presionar al periódico para que despidiera a los editorialistas que lo habían criticado.

Además, el demócrata de 51 años enfrenta el cargo de practicar una política de favores: distribuir empleos, contratos y nombramientos a cambio de donativos a su campaña. "Estábamos en medio de una racha de delitos de corrupción, y queríamos detenerla", dijo el fiscal federal Patrick Fitzgerald, que consideró que los cargos que enfrenta Blagojevich son "verdaderamente un nuevo récord de bajezas".

"La conducta haría que [el ex presidente Abraham] Lincoln se revolvieran en su tumba", agregó.

Por su parte, Obama se manifestó entristecido por la situación e indicó que no formulará más comentarios sobre el asunto porque la investigación está en curso.

Según una declaración jurada de 76 páginas, el FBI grabó conversaciones del gobernador con autorización de una corte durante el mes pasado. En ellas, el funcionario negocia la venta o el intercambio del escaño vacante en el Senado a cambio de beneficios personales para él y su esposa Patti.

En las conversaciones grabadas, el gobernador empleaba abundantes términos soeces. El jefe del FBI en Chicago, Robert Grant, dijo que incluso investigadores muy experimentados quedaron impactados por lo que escucharon, especialmente porque el gobernador sabía desde hace tres años que estaba bajo investi-

gación por supuesto fraude al hacer contrataciones.

Obama renunció a su banca en el Senado después de ganar la presidencia. Por ley, el gobernador escoge a la persona que sustituirá al ahora presidente electo en la cámara alta.

"Tengo esta cosa y es [término soez] de oro", dijo el gobernador en relación con a su autoridad para nombrar al sustituto de Obama, "y no la voy a soltar a cambio de [palabra soez] nada. No voy a hacerlo".

La declaración jurada agrega que Blagojevich pidió un sueldo sustancial para él por parte de una fundación no lucrativa o alguna organización afiliada con sindicatos.

Además, indica que el gobernador también habló sobre la posibilidad de conseguir que su esposa consiguiera un puesto en comités directivos de empresas donde pudiera recibir hasta 150,000 dólares anuales.

El funcionario habló sobre la posibilidad de que, una vez que dejara el puesto de gobernador, obtuviese fondos de campaña para él o posiblemente un lugar en el gabinete del presidente o una embajada.

"Quiero ganar dinero", dijo Blagojevich en una conversación citada por la declaración jurada.

El gobernador enfrenta dos cargos: asociación delictuosa

para cometer fraude, que conlleva una pena máxima de 20 años en prisión, y hacer una solicitud para cometer soborno, que se castiga hasta con 10 años de cárcel.

Los fiscales federales han estado analizando todos los actos de Blagojevich, desde cómo contrató a personas para puestos estatales hasta las acciones de amigos y contribuyentes.

El gobernador ha negado repetidamente haber cometido algún delito. Su portavoz, Lucio Guerrero, no tenía comentarios por el momento en torno a los cargos, pero dio a conocer un comunicado donde afirma que las "acusaciones no alteran los servicios, deberes o función del estado".

Por su parte, los líderes demócratas en Washington e Illinois instaron a la legislatura de este último estado a convocar rápidamente a una elección especial para llenar la banca que dejó vacante Obama, en vez de dejarla en manos de Blagojevich.

El presidente del Senado de Illinois, Emil Jones, dijo que convocará pronto a una sesión de la cámara para aprobar una elección especial con el fin de llenar la vacante. Lo hizo momentos después que el senador demócrata Richard Durbin exhortó a las dos cámaras a hacerlo por un margen que resista un posible veto de Blagojevich.

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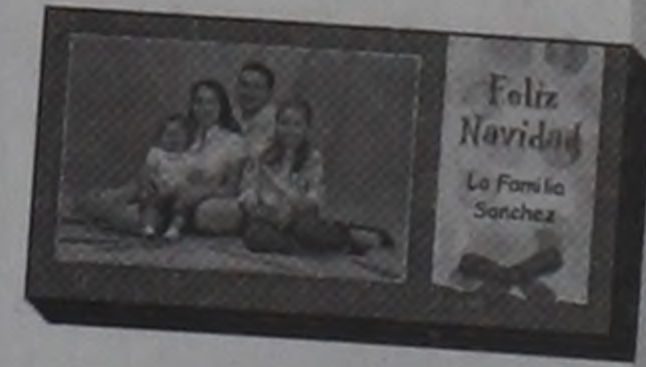
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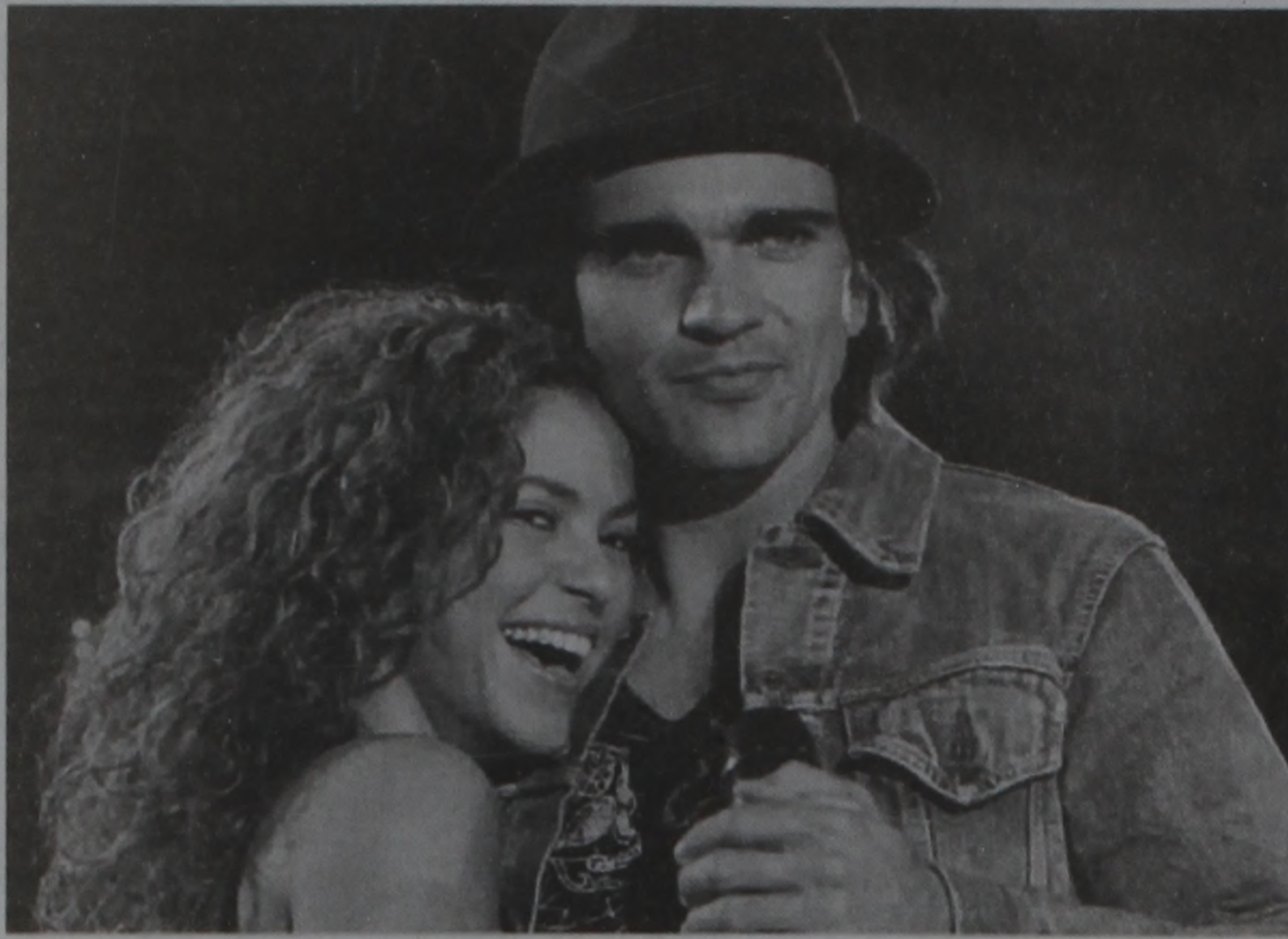
El y Santa son primos. Pancho tiene tuminitos en vez de venados y no dice ho, ho, ho pero quita A-juaj!

Pancho Clos will be arriving at Rogers park, Maggie Trejo Super center, on December 21, 2008 at 2:00 pm. "Pancho Clos" would like to invite all the needy kids of the Lubbock community and the surrounding area to come and see him and let him know what they want for Christmas. The "Pancho Clos" project is sponsored by the American G.I. Forum and is celebrating their thirty seventh anniversary since the origin of "pancho Clos". The American G.I. Forum is a veterans non-profit organization. We would like to thank all those people and organizations and businesses who have helped us with this project throughout the years.

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Juanes niega rivalidad con Shakira

Intervienen nuevamente a Emilio Navaira



El cantautor colombiano Juanes se declaró hoy convencido de que su país saldrá adelante, pese al conflicto armado interno, y negó cualquier rivalidad con su colega Shakira, por la que dijo sentir admiración.

"Soy optimista como artista y como colombiano del futuro del país", expresó el autor de "La camisa negra" en una concurrida rueda de prensa en el diario "El Tiempo", de Bogotá, donde esta semana ofrecerá varios conciertos.

Juan Esteban Aristizábal (su nombre completo), quien recientemente recibió cinco galardones en la IX Edición de

los Premios Grammy Latinos, con lo que sumó 17 en total en su carrera, dijo que el arte se puede poner al servicio de las causas y "no debe casarse con la política".

Recordó, por ejemplo, que el concierto que ofreció con Miguel Bosé, Alejandro Sanz, y Juan Luis Guerra, entre otros, en Cúcuta, ciudad colombiana en la frontera con Venezuela en marzo pasado, "fue apolítico", pues lo que se pretendía era luchar por "la paz" y "por lo social".

La música, en general, sirve para hacer visibles aspectos que pudieran pasar inadvertidos pues "se trata de no olvidar" a quienes sufren por los rigores de un

conflicto que lleva mucho tiempo, como el colombiano, explicó.

El cantante destacó las marchas realizadas en Colombia y en muchos países este año contra la violencia y el secuestro y consideró que son acciones que sirven para llegar a lo que todos los colombianos tienen derecho: "vivir en paz".

"Creo en Colombia y en su futuro", sentenció Juanes, quien agregó que, sobre todas las cosas, sigue apostando por el país, porque tiene dos hijas y porque "vivir en Colombia es lo máximo".

Añadió que desde su perspectiva y tras viajar por muchos

lugares del mundo, cada vez le parece "más injusto lo que pasa en Colombia", e insistió en que es un "conflicto tan absurdo".

Al ser consultado sobre una presunta rivalidad con Shakira, aclaró que no hay ningún tipo de diferencias con la cantautora de "Las caderas no mienten" y "La tortura". "Ni siquiera nos conocemos lo suficiente", dijo el autor de "A Dios le pido", y "La vida es un ratico", e insistió en que por su parte "hay una gran admiración hacia ella en lo musical". "Su carrera ha sido impecable", agregó.

Juanes aseguró, por otra parte, que en su música, en sus composiciones, lo que el público ve y escucha hoy "es la consolidación de lo personal y lo artístico".

Insistió en que todavía tiene "muchos sueños" por realizar, y que jamás dejará de hacerlo pues "esa es la gasolina" que lo mantiene con vida.

Por último, se mostró en desacuerdo con que la administración de Bogotá no le permitiera hacer el concierto en el estadio de fútbol "El Campín" y recordó que en otros escenarios similares, dentro y fuera de Colombia, no ha tenido esas limitaciones.

Sin embargo, indicó que entre mañana y el domingo ofrece presentaciones en un escenario aledaño al que le negaron.

Anunció, finalmente, que desde Colombia irá a cantar a Argentina, Chile, Uruguay y Bolivia, en fechas por precisar.

El cantante de Tex-Mex sufrió una recaída a causa de una infección en el cráneo que afectó su cerebro

Emilio Navaira tuvo que ser intervenido nuevamente la semana pasada en un hospital de San Antonio, TX, tras sufrir una recaída a causa de una infección en el cráneo que afectó su cerebro.

Tras el accidente automovilístico que sufrió el pasado mes de marzo, que lo dejó en estado de coma, al cantante de Tex-Mex le había sido removido un pedazo de cráneo para desinflamar su cerebro. Sin embargo, según reportó el programa de espectáculos El Gordo y la Flaca (Univisión), una vez que le colocaron nuevamente el pedazo de cráneo, el cuerpo del intérprete

de 46 años lo rechazó, causando una infección entre el hueso y el cerebro, por lo que tuvieron que quitárselo.

Según informes, el músico



tejano tendrá que permanecer un tiempo tomando antibióticos, y dentro de unos meses será operado una vez más para ponerle un pedazo de plástico que le cubra el cerebro. Hasta entonces, su cráneo tendrá un hueco, que estará cubierto por el cuero cabelludo.

Questions? Comments?
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'Holidays' a family affair on Humboldt Park movie set

Three of Hollywood's most respected Hispanic movie stars - Elizabeth Peña, Luis Guzman and Freddy Rodríguez - swear they had their best time ever on a movie set when they spent five weeks in Humboldt Park filming "Nothing Like the Holidays".

I know what you're thinking: Movie stars always say they had a great time on the set. It's like how every star manages to have been the producer's "first choice" to play a role.

But this time, the stars say they really mean it: Making "Nothing Like the Holidays" in Chicago was a whole different thing. When I met the three stars in Chicago's Four Seasons Hotel last week, I wanted to know: What made it so special?

"It was an awesome experience," said Guzman, the popular 52-year-old Puerto Rico-born character actor, "shooting in Humboldt Park with all the different families who lived in that neighborhood, who invited us into their homes. There was a celebration going on for five weeks, and that transpired on to film."

Really? Come on, now. Really? "I've never laughed so much on a set before," said Peña, a 47-year-old native New Yorker. "Usually, when somebody yells 'Cut!' everybody splits and goes to their trailer. Here, when they cut, we just kept going and wanting to stay together."

Yeah? And? "Usually, when a movie crew goes into a neighborhood, you're not very welcomed. People want you out, and that was not the case in Humboldt Park. They actually became part of the movie. That was different for me. And all the laughter and the dirty jokes."

Peña looked squarely at Guzman as she said that. He smiled. I turned to Rodríguez for the straight dope. He's 33 and a born-and-bred Chicagoan who wouldn't fib about such things, even if he did serve as executive producer of the movie.

"Normally, when you make a film, you're not greeted warmly because you're taking up parking spaces and disrupting people's daily routines," Rodríguez said. "We were embraced. They literally opened their doors to us. We were invited into people's homes to get warm in between scenes because it was 20 below zero when we were filming."

"People would say to us, 'Hey, I'm going to the grocery store to get stuff to make a dinner for you guys. You're more than welcome to come and eat, and if you can't

come, that's OK, too.' To think that people would go to all that trouble to cook us a meal, in case we got hungry, is beyond me. I've never experienced that before in my life."

"Nothing Like the Holidays" opens wide Friday. It centers around the Rodríguez family members who've come to their parents' Humboldt Park home for Christmas. Jesse (Rodríguez) is back from the Iraq war to reunite with his family, including his cousin Johnny (Guzman) and his mother Anna (Peña), who drops a bomb when she announces she's divorcing her husband (Alfred Molina).

Wait just a second. Is the world ready for Peña to play an aging matriarch? Pena racked up a roster of movies as a Hispanic hottie in such works as "Jacob's Ladder." How does she feel about going from hottie to matriarch?

"It was liberating," she practically shouted. "Liberating! When you play the hottie, you gotta look goood! When you don't, the whole vanity part of it goes out the window. It was awesome. You know how actresses always say 'Don't put powder around my eyes'? Well, I said, 'Powder them up!' In addition to it being liberating, I got to boss everyone around, which is fantastic!"

All three actors say their success in show business took them by

surprise. "I was a social worker in New York City working with teenagers. I stumbled into the business," Guzman said. "I wound up getting a part on the season premiere of 'Miami Vice.' All I wanted out of it was enough money to buy me a used car so I could drive to the beach on the weekends and not have to take mass transit."

"If it had been the first and last thing I ever did, I would have been OK with that. It just kept snowballing and snowballing. I'll be very honest with you. I pinch myself every day. I'm pretty awed by the places that I've been and the people that I've worked with. Watching myself up on the big screen. I'm pretty humbled by it."

Rodríguez, on the other hand, had a theater background. "I never dreamed of doing movies and TV because I always felt that wasn't obtainable," he said. "The goal was to do a play at the Goodman or Steppenwolf. That was always our Broadway for us. No one ever talked about getting in a car and driving to L.A. to do TV and movies."

"The big thing in Chicago back then was I want to get an agent and get a national commercial." When I was 17, I did a national commercial for KFC and I thought I was a superstar. Outside of that,

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De La Hoya Reeling After Pacquiao Loss -- What's Next?

Analysis: Oscar De La Hoya gets comeuppance for dissing Julio Cesar Chavez 10 years ago



were right, Freddie. I don't have it anymore."
Roach said of De La Hoya at the postfight news conference: "He had a great career. But I would like to see him retire, because it's over."

Retirement Next?
There has been no official word from De La Hoya on that just yet, though he had said beforehand that if he didn't defeat Pacquiao, "It's over." As it probably should be.

De La Hoya, 35, has regressed. He has now fought just seven times since 2003, losing four of those bouts.

He was never in it Saturday. Pacquiao kept to the game plan, forcing the fight to the middle of the ring in the early rounds and staying on the move to negate De La Hoya's jab. He increased the pressure in the seventh, hammering De La Hoya with blows to the face and backing him into the ropes. Between rounds, the ring doctor examined De La Hoya but allowed the fight to continue. But the fight was gone from the former champion. "I was connecting with everything," Pacquiao said. "He was connecting with nothing."

Said De La Hoya: "My body seemed not able to respond. "I didn't have the strength to stop him."

It was a little more than 10 years ago that Oscar De La Hoya defeated Mexican legend Julio Cesar Chavez for the second time.

After his victory in which Chavez retired in his corner after the eighth round De La Hoya performed a victory dance that many Chavez loyalists took as disrespectful.

Over the years, De La Hoya has more or less been resented by Mexican fans because of his wins over Chavez. And many couldn't wait for payback.

They got it Saturday at the MGM Grand.

Like Chavez a decade ago, De La Hoya retired in his corner after the eighth round having been beaten to a pulp by pound-for-pound king Manny Pacquiao.

Also like Chavez, it was likely the end of De La Hoya's career, as the younger, stronger Pacquiao made the "Golden Boy" look old and washed-up.

De La Hoya did not attend the post-fight press conference after his crushing defeat Saturday. Golden Boy CEO Richard Schaefer spoke in De La Hoya's absence, saying that the defeated champion wanted to congratulate Pacquiao for a great fight and a great victory.

Schaefer said De La Hoya went to the hospital for precautionary reasons.

Light heavyweight champ Bernard Hopkins, a business partner of De La Hoya's, also spoke on the Los Angeles fighter's behalf.

"It is what it is," Hopkins said. "You have to give credit to Pacquiao for fighting a great fight. Oscar just didn't have it tonight."

Hopkins actually fielded questions about De La Hoya's

future in the sport, which looks hazy at best.

Hopkins said, "Oscar's the only one that can make that decision. Each boxer knows when it's their time."

Meanwhile, Pacquiao entered the press room to thunderous applause from his Filipino countrymen, dressed classily in a suit and tie and staying true to his humble roots.

Pacquiao actually wiped a tear from his eye after being informed that De La Hoya was at the hospital.

"Oscar was my idol," Pacquiao said. "He still is my idol."

Perhaps, but De La Hoya is clearly at the end of the road. He may have one more good-bye fight. But the way he was systematically destroyed by Pacquiao Saturday one judge only gave him one round most people will encourage De La Hoya to retire.

Hall of Fame trainer Angelo Dundee, who was brought on to advise De La Hoya, was asked whether there was any advice he didn't take.

"Oscar was prepared and had trained to win," Dundee said. "But he ran into a better fighter tonight. That's boxing. Someone has to win."

Pacquiao did the winning -- emphatically. He must now be considered one of the greatest fighters of his generation, and trainer Freddie Roach hailed him as a modern-day Henry Armstrong, who won world titles at featherweight, lightweight and welterweight.

Pacquiao has now done the same, as he looks forward to showdowns with junior welterweight champ Ricky Hatton and former pound-for-pound king Floyd Mayweather Jr.



As Oscar De La Hoya was being taken to a hospital, the man whose fists had caused the damage stood at a podium inside a casino ballroom to discuss their fight.

Manny Pacquiao was dressed nattily in a dark suit with his black hair combed neatly to one side, looking more like someone who was about to step out for a date than the boxer who had brought De La Hoya to surrender inside the ring one hour earlier.

Pacquiao spoke of how speed was "the king of the fight," how his quickness overcame size and reputation and proved to be the difference in his eight-round technical knockout of De La Hoya on Saturday at the MGM Grand.

And Pacquiao used the opportunity to interject a personal thought.

De La Hoya, the 29-year-old Filipino said, "is still my idol."

Only De La Hoya now is a fallen idol.

The luster is off the Golden Boy, a point that Pacquiao made abundantly clear in his overwhelming victory over the former champ.

He landed 224 punches to 83 for De La Hoya, who was so soundly beaten, his left eye nearly swollen shut, that he did not answer the bell for the ninth.

Calling It Quits
"I stopped the fight because I did not want him to leave his greatness in the ring," said De La Hoya's trainer, Nacho Beristain.

Beristain made official what most everyone inside the MGM

and a pay-per-view audience saw soon after the opening bell: that De La Hoya is no longer the boxer he once was and that retirement might be his only recourse.

Pacquiao was the aggressor at all times, scoring almost at will.

"I knew from Round 1 we had him," said Pacquiao's trainer, Freddie Roach. "He had no legs."

"He was hesitant. He was shot."

Roach had an axe to grind. De La Hoya hired Roach as his trainer, then fired him after just one fight last year against Floyd Mayweather Jr. Now Roach sat in the opposite corner and delighted in the outcome.

After Saturday's fight, when De La Hoya crossed the ring to congratulate Pacquiao, he turned to Roach and confessed, "You

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Guadalupe Neighborhood Association "Lights in Lubbock" 2008 winner is Irene Wilson of 214 Ave. L. Ms. Wilson will be representing Guadalupe Neighborhood on Friday, Dec. 12, 2008, is the final judging from 6 to 10 pm. Photo by Lile Quirino

Tamales, delicia para Navidad

Ahora que se acercan las fiestas navideñas, muchos tienen visiones de dulces de todos los colores, pero los inmigrantes mexicanos como Margarita Larios seguramente sueñan con comer alimentos más sabrosos en las Posadas. Especialmente tamales.

Esa es la festividad, de nueve días de duración, en la cual mexicanos rinden homenaje a la travesía bíblica de María y de José en busca de refugio en una tierra foránea.

Para cada una de esas jornadas, desde el 16 de diciembre hasta el 24, familias y amigos reviven la historia de la Navidad con cantos, procesiones a la luz de las velas y piñatas para los niños.

Y la celebración no concluye hasta que se ofrece una comida que puede saciar al viajero más hambriento: moles oscuros, hechos con chocolates y pimientos. A eso se suman ponches calientes hechos con tejocotes, una fruta parecida a la manzana, y piloncillos, bloques de azúcar de caña sin refinar. Pero el plato fuerte siguen siendo los tamales, dulces o salados, que se sacan calientes de grandes ollas.

"Usted siempre tiene que acompañar el ponche con los tamales", dice Larios, de 60 años, que enseña a fabricar tamales para las Posadas en un taller de la organización cultural Mano a Mano, con sede en Nueva York.

Manuel A. Vásquez, profesor de religiones de América Latina en la universidad de Florida, dice que durante las Posadas se sirven alimentos ricos en calorías y muy sabrosos pues simbolizan la abundancia.

El lo compara con servir comidas fuertes en festivales de la cosecha, tales como el Día de Acción de Gracias.

"Está vinculado a la buena nueva del nacimiento de Cristo", dice Vásquez. "Por lo tanto, hay gran cantidad de azúcar y de grasa, para mostrar que el año nuevo es un año próspero".

Las Posadas es una festividad con un valor muy especial para el inmigrante, datan del siglo XVI, cuando sacerdotes católi-

cos que intentaban evangelizar a los indios de México advirtieron que podían enseñarles la fe mediante la recreación de historias bíblicas.

Y una de las más importantes historias que intentaron mostrar de manera dramática los evangelizadores fue la Navidad. De allí emergieron las Posadas.

"Uno de los significados más profundos de las Posadas es la lucha de los inmigrantes", dice Timothy Matovina, un teólogo y profesor de la universidad de Notre Dame. Según Matovina, los inmigrantes mexicanos pueden ver cómo sus historias personales se reflejan en los dos peregrinos bíblicos.

Las Posadas son celebradas a través de todo el suroeste de Estados Unidos y prácticamente en cualquier lugar donde alguna comunidad mexicana haya echado raíces en el país.

Uno de esos lugares es Chicago, donde el chef Rick Bayless ha ascendido a los rangos más altos de la gastronomía mexicana. Según Bayless los tamales, hechos con harina de maíz cocinada al vapor, acompañada de rellenos tales como carne vacuna o de pollo, cebollas fritas, pimientos y otros ingredientes, envueltos en hojas de maíz o de plátano, son perfectos para esas ocasiones.

Los ingredientes para los tamales son bastante sencillos. Si uno no vive cerca de un almacén donde venden alimentos mexicanos, posiblemente lo más difícil será conseguir harina de maíz y las hojas, aunque pueden adquirirse online. En cuanto a las hojas de plátano, en ocasiones pueden comprarse en almacenes de productos asiáticos.

Para dar sabor a los tamales, generalmente se usa carne



molida guisada con pimientos. Los tamales dulces se preparan con ananá pisado y con pasas de uva que quedan hinchadas con el vapor. Pero la tradición permite toda clase de ingredientes, desde mariscos hasta zapallo.

Danny Mena, chef del restaurante de Brooklyn Hecho En Dumbo, sugiere combinar mole poblano con pato, en lugar del tradicional pavo.

"Creo que el pato es más succulento y sabroso", dice Mena.

En cuanto al tipo de grasa que se usa, dice Bayless, determina el sabor de los tamales, así como su textura esponjosa. Su grasa favorita es la de cerdo, comprada en una carnicería mexicana o alemana.

Bayless y otros chefs dicen que se puede comprar la grasa de cerdo en lata, si es difícil adquirir la grasa fresca. Otra posibilidad es la grasa vegetal. La manteca sin sal es apropiada para los tamales dulces.

Cuando la base es mezclada hasta que adquiere la consistencia de la masa de torta, y una bola logra flotar en agua fría, seguramente los tamales serán muy esponjosos.

Es cierto que los tamales no son una comida para quien desea conservar la silueta. Bayless dice que cada vez que va a algún lado y alguien le informa que está haciendo tamales con aceite de oliva extra virgen, la receta es un desastre.

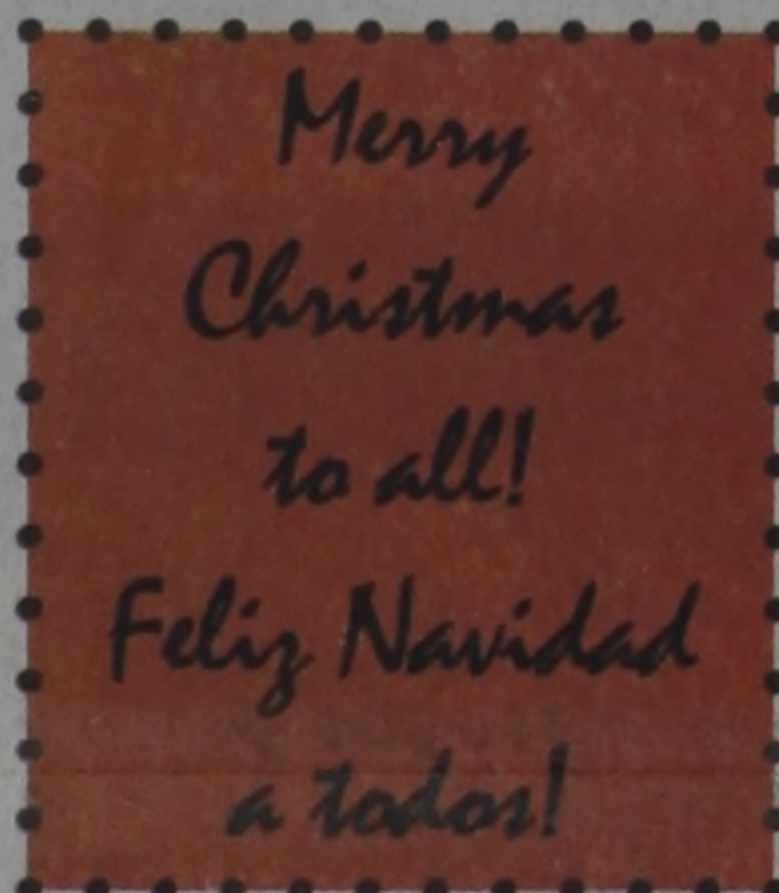
"Es lo mismo que hacer medicinas de dieta", señala.



Los 'Riojas & Aguero' family got together over the this past weekend to have some good times during their adventure of making tamales. Bidal & Olga would like to thank everyone that contributed to this great event. "Happy Holidays & God Blessings to All"



Azelia Reyes celebrated her 8th Birthday with an ice cream cake on Monday with grandparents Bidal & Olga Aguero and other family members. Happy birthday to her and wish her well always -- "Hugs & kisses"!



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