

November Election Leads List of Hispanic Concerns in 2000

By Patricia Guadalupe (First of two parts)

Latino leaders across the country concur that the Hispanic vote in November's elections will be one of the most important issues — if not the most important — for the community in the year 2000.

"This year will perhaps be the most significant election to date for Latinos," said Guarioné Díaz, executive director of the Cuban American National Council in Miami. "You can see that by the amount of outreach to the community the presidential candidates have been doing right from the beginning. It's unprecedented."

The Hispanic vote will particularly be key in the large electoral-vote states that candidates need in order to win. In California, where nearly 10 million Hispanics reside, the Hispanic vote in 1998 helped Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamante become the first Latino to achieve that position in more than a century. The number of Hispanics serving in the state legislature tripled during the 1990s.

"(The Latino vote) will be of paramount importance, especially here. We saw it in the last election," said Julie Reynolds, editorial director of El Andar, the Santa Cruz, Calif.-based national Latino magazine.



Reynolds and others note a substantial increase in the number of Hispanics who are running for office. "In nearby Watsonville, for instance, the mayor is Hispanic and the city council is majority Hispanic, and I know of more and more

people who say they are not only going to vote, but they're also going to run for office," she said. "It's pretty amazing to see."

Brent Wilkes, executive director of the League of United Latin American Citizens

in Washington, D.C., predicts that the "Latino vote across the country will bring new levels of empowerment, and it will change (non-Hispanic) politicians. As (participation) continues, Hispanics will be part of the American society as a full partner,"

Nationwide, Hispanic voters cast 5 percent of the nation's ballots in the 1998 elections. The number of Hispanic voters increased 60 percent over 1994. An estimated 56 percent of the eligible population in the Latino community is currently registered to vote.

In November, Hispanic voter turnout is expected to increase dramatically once again.

Looking further ahead, Hispanic leaders are concerned about the 2000 census and its implications in the 2002 elections. Demographers project that, among eight states likely to pick up congressional seats following reapportionment (based on the states' population increases), most have very large or quickly increasing Hispanic population. They are Texas and Arizona (two new seats each) and California, Florida, Colorado, Georgia, Nevada and Montana (one seat each).

"A lot rests on the census," said Antonia Hernández, president of the

Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund. "There will be a substantial change in demographics, and we need to have an accurate count."

California state Sen. Hilda Solís, who is challenging U.S. Rep. Matthew Martínez, a fellow Democrat, for his seat this year, concurs. "The census will be very critical," she said. "It will have a domino effect in every level of government. ... Latinos are flexing their politica muscles, but we need a stronger Latino representation."

Félix Gutierrez, director of the Alexandria, Va.-based Freedom Forum's Pacific Coast Center, summed it up: "We are younger. We have a lot more power than we did 10 years ago. We have more local impact, But I don't know when that will be translated to a national force."

The real test, he said, "is whether or not we have an impact as a swing vote in key states, such as California, Texas and Florida." The presidential candidates, he added, "must learn to listen to us in any language rather than talk to us in broken Spanish. You need to do more than sound bytes in Spanish to understand what we're about."

(Patricia Guadalupe is editor of the national newswweekly Hispanic Link Weekly Report in Washington, D.C. Reporter Orwaldo Zavala assisted in this story.)

"El Respeto al
Derecho Ajeno
es La Paz."
"Respect for
the Rights of
Others Is Peace"
Lic. Benito
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Exiliados cubanos exigen la libertad del joven balsero Elián González

Un día después de que oficiales estadounidenses decidieran que Elián González debe regresar a Cuba con su padre, cientos de exiliados cubanos se congregaron en el centro de la ciudad, caminando lentamente y organizando obstrucciones en cruces principales.

Los manifestantes atravesaron barreras policiales que habían sido colocadas para mantenerlos controlados cerca del Edificio Federal Claude Pepper, 51 SW First Ave., en Miami. Aunque la protesta fue pacífica por lo general, algunos automovilistas se encontraron de repente frente a exiliados que caminaban a lo largo de la calle Flagler, vía principal del centro de la ciudad.

Se cerraron algunas secciones de Biscayne Boulevard y otras calles principales. Varios policías del condado de Miami-Dade, que portaban equipo antidisturbios, se congregaron en el bulevar frente al Puerto de Miami e intentaron impedir el paso hacia el norte y el puerto.

"Perdimos la calle", dijo el teniente William Schwartz, "pero los manifestantes no intentan herir a nadie".

Algunos manifestantes prometieron continuar las protestas esta tarde y durante los próximos días hasta que los tribunales o el gobierno de Clinton revoque la decisión.

"Esto sólo continuará hasta que responda la Casa Blanca," dijo Julio Cabarga, que dirige Los Municipios de Cuba en Exilio, un grupo anticastrista. "Estamos dispuestos a mantener las movilizaciones."

El gobierno, no obstante, todavía no ha respondido a las protestas y su efecto quedaban en la incógnita.

Mientras hablaba, alrededor de 300 manifestantes se reunieron en el centro de la ciudad antes del mediodía. Muchos portaban banderas cubanas y estadounidenses y otros gritaban eslógans mientras agitaban carteles.

Ramiro Menéndez de Miami portaba un cartel amarillo con el siguiente mensaje: "La madre de Elián murió para salvarle de Castro; Clinton premiará a Castro si devuelven a Elián. Qué lástima".

El miércoles el Servicio de Inmigración y Naturalización dijo que Elián, que llegó a Miami el día de Acción de Gracias después de que muriera su madre en un naufragio, debe regresar a Cuba para vivir con su padre.

En Washington, la Fiscal General Janet Reno dijo que no hay base real para revocar la decisión.

"Elián tiene padre y la ley reconoce el lazo entre padre e hijo. Debemos honrar esa relación", dijo. "No tenemos ningún informe que indicara que la conexión legal, ese lazo, no se debe respetar".

Elecciones de Noviembre Encabezan la Lista de Preocupaciones de Hispanos

Por Patricia Guadalupe

Los dirigentes latinos de todo el país concuerdan en que la votación de los hispanos en las elecciones del próximo noviembre serán uno de los asuntos más importantes — si no el más importante — para la comunidad en el año 2000.

"Las de este año serán quizás las elecciones más importantes para los latinos hasta la fecha," dice Guarioné Díaz, director ejecutivo del Consejo Nacional Cubano-Americano de Miami. "Se puede ver eso por la cantidad de comunicación a la comunidad que los candidatos presidenciales han estado haciendo desde el mismo comienzo. No tiene precedentes."

El voto hispano será especialmente crítico en los estados con gran cantidad de votos electorales, que los candidatos necesitan a fin de ganar. En California, donde residen casi 10 millones de hispanos, el voto hispano en 1998 ayudó al Vice-Gobernador Cruz Bustamante a llegar a ser el primer latino que haya ostentado esa plaza en más de un siglo. La cantidad de hispanos que son miembros de la legislatura estatal se triplicó en el decenio de 1990.

"El voto latino será de importancia capital, especialmente aquí. Lo vimos en las últimas elecciones", concuerda Julie Reynolds, directora editorial de "El Andar," la revista nacional latina con sede en Santa Cruz, California.

Reynolds y otros advierten un aumento considerable de la cantidad de hispanos postulados para cargos electivos. "En la cercana Watsonville, por ejemplo, el alcalde es hispano y el concejo municipal es hispano en su mayoría, y sé de más y más personas que dicen que no sólo van a votar, sino que también van a postularse," dice ella. "Es bastante asombroso de ver."

Brent Wilkes, director ejecutivo de la Liga de Ciudadanos Latino-Americanos Unidos (LULAC) en Washington, D.C., pronostica: "El voto latino a través de todo el país traerá nuevos niveles de habilitación, y hará cambiar a los políticos no hispanos. A medida que continúe la participación, los hispanos serán parte de la sociedad estadounidense como socios completos."

En todo el país, los electores hispanos depositaron el 5 por ciento de las boletas electorales en las elecciones de 1998, un 60 por ciento de aumento sobre las cifras de 1994. Un 56 por ciento estimado de la población elegible para votar en la comunidad latina está inscripto actualmente para votar. Se espera que la concurrencia de los electores hispanos a las casillas electorales aumente dramáticamente una vez más en noviembre próximo.

Al mirar más lejos hacia adelante, los dirigentes hispanos están preocupados por el Censo del Año 2000 y sus inferencias para las elecciones del 20002. Los demógrafos pronostican que, entre ocho estados que tienen probabilidades de agregar escaños congresionales a continuación de la re-demarcación (basada el los aumentos de población de los estados), la mayoría de ellos tienen poblaciones hispanas muy grandes o que aumentan rápidamente. Esos son: Texas and Arizona (dos nuevos escaños cada uno), y California, la Florida, Colorado, Georgia, Nevada y Montana (un escaño cada uno).

Los dirigentes políticos y de organizaciones hispanas están preocupados por el Censo y sus inferencias, tanto políticas como económicas.

"Mucho depende del Censo," dice Antonia Hernández, presidenta del Fondo México-Americano para la Defensa Legal y la Enseñanza (MALDEF). "Habrá un cambio substancial en las estadísticas demográficas y necesitamos tener un conteo exacto." Los estadísticos proyectan que California podría aumentar tres o cuatro escaños congresionales en el año 2003, a continuación de la re-demarcación de los distritos electorales basada en el aumento de la población del estado.

La Senadora Estatal de California Hilda Solís, que está retando al Representante Federal Matthew Martínez, su colega demócrata, por su escaño en este año, concurre diciendo: "El Censo tendrá un efecto de dominó a todos los niveles del gobierno. ... Los latinos están flexionando sus músculos políticos, pero necesitamos una representación latina más sólida."

Félix Gutiérrez, director del Centro de Freedom Forum para la Costa del Pacifico, con sede en Alexandria, Virginia, lo resume así: "Somos más jóvenes. Tenemos mucho más poder que hace diez años. Tenemos más efecto local. Pero no sé cuándo eso se traducirá en una fuerza nacional."

La prueba verdadera, dice él, "es si tenemos un efecto o no como votación decisiva en los estados claves, tales como California, Texas y la Florida." Los candidatos presidenciales, concluye él, "deben aprender a escucharnos en cualquier idioma, antes que hablarnos en un español chapurreado. Se necesita hacer más que pedacitos de sonidos en español para comprender de qué se trata respecto de nosotros."

(Patricia Guadalupe es la editora del semanario nacional Hispanic Link News Service en Washington, D.C. El reportero Orwaldo Zavala ayudó con este artículo.)

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INS Decision on Cuban Boy Ignites Strong Reactions

By RICARDO VAZQUEZ

By the hundreds, angry Cuban exiles in Miami began to gather today outside the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) office as word leaked out of the agency's decision to grant custody of 6-year-old "rafter" boy Elián González to his father in Cuba.

In a statement INS Commissioner Doris Meissner admitted the case had been difficult, but concluded that "this little boy, who has been through so much, belongs with his father."

Many exiles, however, took to the streets in protest over the decision. Although Miami resident Zoraida Pérez watched the events unfold on television, her opinion is representative of many fellow Cuban exiles upset over the INS ruling.

"We were in favor of having the child stay here in the United States," she said, "Here, he would have a better life and I believe his father in Cuba is under enormous pressure by the Castro regime."

But it's not as though Cubans in Miami are impervious to the complexity of the issues.



"If you look coldly at the law, one may conclude that he should be with his father," added Pérez, "But only other Cubans seem to understand the problems Elián will face if he's returned to the island."

One person that does understand is Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fl.), who criticized the INS for not giving Elián's relatives in Miami the chance to have the case decided in a family court.

"The Clinton Administration has chosen to ignore...the needs and welfare of Elián González, by making a unilateral decision

to return him to Cuba -- a decision based solely on information provided by the Castro regime and on controlled interviews with Elián's father," said Ros-Lehtinen in a statement.

Elián was found clinging to an inner tube on Thanksgiving day after his mother and stepfather had drowned in a shipwreck while fleeing from Cuba. No sooner had the boy arrived in the U.S. when an international custody battle erupted between his relatives in Miami and his father and grandparents in Cuba.

But Cindy Lerner, a juvenile law attorney and former staff attorney for the Guardian Ad Litem in Miami Dade County, insisted that the law is very clear in these cases. "Under Florida law, the father has an absolute right to have the custody, and the state would have no right to keep the child from being returned to his father, barring allegations of abuse or neglect." Added Lerner: "There are none in this case."

Elián, argued Lerner, has been used as a political pawn by

News Briefs

Despite Protests, Texas to Begin New Year with More Executions

By Judith Torrea

Austin, - Texas, which has executed more prisoners than any other state since the death penalty was restored in 1976, will begin the new year with a new round of executions despite protests from minority groups and human rights organizations.

For January alone, the state of Texas has scheduled the executions of nine inmates, including several sentenced to death while they were still minors.

The year will begin with the execution by lethal injection of Earl Heinselbetz at 6:00 p.m. (2300 GMT) Jan. 12.

Heinselbetz will be the 200th inmate executed in Texas since 1982, the year Texas resumed executions after the 1976 restoration of capital punishment by the U.S. Supreme Court.

The pace of executions has increased in Texas, with the state reaching an annual high in 1997 of 37 executions. Combined, Texas and Virginia have conducted 45 percent of the 598 executions in the United States since 1976.

In 1999, Texas executed 35 people, including minors, the mentally ill, the mentally retarded and foreign nationals.

Lawyers representing some of the foreign nationals executed in Texas charge that the executions were a violation of the Vienna Convention because state officials did not inform the prisoners of their right to contact their country's local consulate.

For the relatives of some of the condemned - such as Brenda Elizalde, Blanca Ayestes or Alma Tamayo - the most discouraging aspect of the arrival of a new millennium is, as one of them said, "the fact that capital punishment is still being applied and our loved ones continue on death row because they never received a fair trial."

On Dec. 31, at 6:00 p.m. (2300 GMT) - execution hour in Huntsville, Texas - inmates Fredy Elizalde, Carlos Ayestes and Edgar Tamayo will begin counting down to the day they make their final walk down death row to receive their lethal injections.

That same day in Houston, a group of the inmates' family members and activists will begin a vigil in a tent erected in Guadalupe Plaza, in Houston's Hispanic section.

"At six in the evening, the sun will begin to go down, and it is as if with the setting of the sun on this final day of the year this nightmare will disappear, but the frustration of not being able to defend our children remains," said Blanca Jimenez, founder of Familias Unidas (United Families).

Those gathered for the vigil will remain in the plaza until 6:00 a.m. (1100 GMT) on Jan. 1, 2000.

"This is the hour of the arrival of the new sun, of renewed faith, of our hope for the new millennium: the abolition of the death penalty," Jimenez emphasized.

U.S. Border Patrol Adds Agents to Control Illegal Influx

Douglas, Arizona, - The U.S. Border Patrol announced Tuesday that it will tighten its security near Douglas, Arizona, adding 400 additional agents, fences that stand 3.5 meters (11 feet) high and video surveillance cameras in an effort to stem the influx of thousands of illegal immigrants.

Immigration authorities are seeking to continue the success enjoyed in 1999, when some 200,000 people were intercepted as they tried to illegally cross the border into the United States.

Teams of heavy machinery on Tuesday cleaned the lot near where a 12-foot metal fence was installed to curb the flow of illegal immigrants into the United States in the Douglas area.

The U.S. Border Patrol has increased the number of its agents patrolling the border region on foot or bicycle, and, in addition to video cameras, has installed spotlights to improve night vision in the area.

It has also changed the work schedules of the more than 400 agents in order to have a round-the-clock watch.

These changes come as part of Operation Safeguard, one of the largest efforts against illegal immigration, which for the last five years has increased U.S. Border Patrol manpower and technological resources in Arizona.

The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) classifies the operation as "a high profile, high intensity operation."

Illegal immigration along the U.S.-Mexican border increased last year as "coyotes," or immigrant smugglers, began finding new routes to avoid authorities along the border in California and Texas.

Douglas has become a "hot spot" for illegal immigration, U.S. Border Patrol director for the area, Gus de la Viña said.

Patrols arrested almost 500,000 illegal immigrants last year, of which 40 percent were arrested near Douglas, the population of which is under 18,000.

George Lopez, chief of the Border Patrol in the Tucson area, said that an increase in arrests is expected this year.

About a week ago agents arrested some 275 illegals who attempted to cross the border in two separate groups near Nogales.

According to Lopez, "We are expecting the heaviest flow early in the year, as immigrants who left the United States to visit their families during Christmas will try to return through this area."

"We are expecting an increase in the arrests of illegals because we have more permanent agents on patrol, but we also hope that immigrants understand that we will be here, with a greater presence and resources," he added.

anti-Castro groups in Miami who have said that the child should not go back because he has a chance at a better life here. "That's not the issue," said Lerner, "and it's not fair to the father or his other family in

Cuba." The tug-of-war over Elian's custody, insisted Lerner, has "poisoned" what should have been a "simple return to the family."

Continued on Page 5

THE TRAGEDY OF EXILE

By Margarita Engle

On Thanksgiving Day, a child emerged from the sea, his wide-eyed image quickly growing, like a magic-realistic version of the Little Mermaid, into a heartbreaking myth.

All the persons I've talked to agree that Elián González should be reunited with his father in Cuba. They also agree that he should enjoy a future blessed with freedom of speech, freedom of worship and the freedom to choose between all the marvelous and atrocious lifestyles available in a democratic society.

Unfortunately, that ideal combination is, at present, as unattainable as the Little Mermaid's wish for the combination of landlocked love and painless legs.

Elián has touched the hearts of Cuban-Americans not only because he is small and helpless, but because he represents several generations of people who have been forced to choose between living with relatives and living with freedom.

My Cuba-born grandmother, for instance, is approaching her 99th birthday. Her last surviving sister died around the time of Elián's miraculous survival. When my great-aunt died, nearly three decades had passed since she and my grandmother had seen each other. In the early 1970s, when Abuelita left Cuba on one of the last "freedom flights," her sister stayed behind, Little did either one imagine that their tearful farewell would be permanent.

My grandmother, who started life in a family of 14, now has only one surviving brother. Tío-abuelo Julio is a doctor and dentist in a small town in north-central Cuba, and even though he has often tried to retire, his loyal patients continue coming to him for advice and cures. During

the early years of his medical practice, he made daring house calls on horseback, braving bad roads and bad weather for the chance to save lives and deliver babies. Now he totters along with a cane, enjoying the respect and affection of the entire population of the rural village where he was once mayor.

He is locally famous for founding the only park in town and for establishing a clubhouse where young people can gather to dance, and where the old folks — known collectively as el Club de los Abuelos — can meet to exercise, visit and learn nutrition. Julio is, in other words, an ingenious and accomplished man. Yet in some ways he is just as helpless as little Elián. His only sister, my grandmother, lives thousands of miles away, and there is nothing he can do to appease the 40 years of hostility between her country and his.

Despite failing vision, my grandmother still writes letters to her brother whenever the California sun shines brightly enough for her to see her pen and paper. She speaks to her brother across the miles on days when the notoriously antiquated U.S.-Cuba phone lines are working. But she's too old to travel, and it's unlikely that she will ever touch her brother's face one last time, or gaze into his loving eyes.

The last time my grandmother saw Julio, he was in his 60s. Now, just like her, he has entered the 10th decade of his life. If Abuelita makes it to her 100th birthday in March 2001, relatives from Miami will flock to Los Angeles to congratulate her.

But her brother won't be among them. During the years when he was strong enough to travel, the Cuban government would have punished him for wanting to set foot on imperialist

soil. During those same years, my grandmother could have applied for permission to make the journey, but she was afraid. She had escaped Cuba once, and she didn't want to face the possibility of having to do it all over again.

The Cuban government classified her, in exile, as a (ITAL)gusana(UNITAL), a worm. Visiting "worms" are required to surrender the protection of their U.S. passports, exchanging them for documents that once again make them Cuban subjects, no matter how long they have been naturalized U.S. citizens.

Like hundreds of thousands of other Cuban refugees, my grandmother wasn't willing to take the risk. By choosing freedom, she had to sacrifice her chance to be reunited with family members, never imagining that the stalemate between governments would continue into the next millennium.

If Elián González stays in the United States, no one should promise him that his future as a free man will be rosy. He could end up on drugs, or in prison, or homeless. In Cuba, on the other hand, he would have a father, and hunger, and the fear of being overheard by neighborhood spies.

Either way, there will be tragedy in his life. Let's just pray that his generation is the last to be faced with the same choices that keep my grandmother from embracing her brother one last time.

(Margarita Engle, of Clovis, Calif., is the author of two novels on Cuba, "Singing to Cuba" and "Skywriting." Her third novel, on the persecution of independent journalists on the island, is scheduled for publication this year by Harmony/Crown.)

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LA TRAGEDIA DEL EXILIO

Por Margarita Engle

En el Día de Acción de Gracias, un niño surgió del mar, su imagen de ojos amplios creciendo rápidamente, como una versión de magia realista de la Pequeña Sirena, hasta llegar a ser un mito que rompe el corazón.

Todos los estadounidenses con quienes he hablado están de acuerdo en que Elián González debería ser reunido con su padre en Cuba. También están de acuerdo con que él debería disfrutar de un futuro bendecido con la libertad de expresión, la libertad de cultos y la libertad para seleccionar entre todos los estilos de vida maravillosos y atroces disponibles en una sociedad democrática. Desgraciadamente, esa combinación ideal es, actualmente, tan difícil de lograr como el deseo de la Pequeña Sirena de la combinación de amor sin salida al mar y piernas sin dolor.

Elián ha llegado a los corazones de los cubano-americanos, no sólo porque es pequeño e indefenso, sino porque él representa a varias generaciones de personas que se han visto obligadas a escoger entre vivir con sus familiares y vivir con libertad. Mi abuela nacida en Cuba, por ejemplo, está aproximándose rápidamente a su noagésimo-noveno cumpleaños. Su última hermana sobreviviente murió alrededor del día de la supervivencia milagrosa de Elián. Cuando mi tía-abuela murió, habían transcurrido casi tres decenios desde que ella y mi abuela se habían visto. A principios del decenio de 1970, cuando abuelita salió de Cuba en uno de los últimos "vuelos de la libertad," su hermana se quedó allá. Poco se imaginó cualquiera de ellas que su despedida lacrimosa sería permanente.

Mi abuela, que empezó su vida en una familia de 14 miembros, ahora tiene solamente un hermano que sobrevive. Mi tío-abuelo Julio es médico y dentista en un pueblecito al norte de la parte central de Cuba, y aún cuando él ha tratado de jubilarse a menudo, sus pacientes leales

continúan acercándose a él en busca de consejos y curaciones. Durante los primeros años de su práctica de la medicina, él hacía visitas domiciliarias arriesgadas a caballo, recorriendo valerosamente caminos malos y en mal tiempo por la oportunidad de salvar vidas y recibir bebés al nacer. Ahora él se tambalea con un bastón, disfrutando del respeto y el cariño de toda la población de la aldea rural donde él fué una vez el alcalde.

El es famoso en la localidad por haber fundado el único parque del pueblo y por haber establecido una casa social donde los jóvenes pueden reunirse para bailar y donde los ancianos, conocidos por "El Club de los Abuelos," pueden reunirse para hacer ejercicio, visitarse mutuamente y aprender sobre la nutrición. Julio es, en otras palabras, un hombre ingenioso y realizado. Sin embargo, en algunas formas él está tan indefenso como Elián. Su única hermana, mi abuela, vive a miles de millas de distancia, y no hay nada que él pueda hacer para mitigar los 40 años de hostilidad entre su país y el de él.

A pesar de su visión defectuosa, mi abuela escribe cartas aún a su hermano, siempre que el sol de California brille lo suficiente para que ella vez su pluma y su papel. Ella le habla a su hermano, a través de las millas, en los días en que las líneas telefónicas de Cuba, notoriamente anticuadas, estén funcionando. Pero ella es demasiado anciana como para viajar, y es improbable que ella llegue alguna vez a tocar la cara de su hermano por última vez, o a mirarle a sus ojos cariñosos.

La última vez que mi abuela vió a Julio él estaba entre sus 60 y 70 años. Ahora, igual que ella, él ha llegado a la décima década de su vida. Si abuelita vive hasta su centésimo cumpleaños, en marzo del año 2001, sus familiares de Miami se aglomerarán en Los Angeles para felicitarla, pero su hermano no estará entre ellos. Durante

los años en que él estaba suficientemente fuerte como para viajar, el gobierno de Cuba lo habría castigado por desear poner el pie en suelo imperialista. Durante esos mismos años, mi abuela podría haber solicitado permiso para hacer el viaje, pero estaba temerosa. Ella se había escapado de Cuba una vez y no quería enfrentarse a la posibilidad de tener que hacerlo otra vez. Como exiliada, el gobierno de Cuba la clasificaba como gusana. A los gusanos que van de visita, se les exige que entreguen la protección de sus pasaportes estadounidenses, canjeándolos por documentos que los hacen nuevamente súbditos cubanos, sin que importe cuánto tiempo hayan sido ciudadanos naturalizados de los Estados Unidos. Como cientos de miles de otros refugiados cubanos, mi abuela no estaba dispuesta a correr el riesgo. Al escoger la libertad, ella tuvo que sacrificar su oportunidad de reunirse con los miembros de su familia, sin imaginarse nunca que el estancamiento entre ambos gobiernos continuaría hasta la fecha.

Si Elián González se queda en los Estados Unidos, nadie debería prometerle que su futuro como persona libre será de color de rosa. El podría terminar enviado con narcóticos, o en prisión, o como desamparado. En Cuba, por otra parte, tendría un padre, hambre y el temor de ser espiado por los delatores de la vecindad.

De cualquier manera, habrá tragedia en su vida. Sólo oremos porque su generación sea la última que tenga que enfrentarse con las mismas decisiones que evitan el que mi abuela pueda abrazar a su hermano por última vez.

(Margarita Engle, de Clovis, California, es autora de dos novelas sobre Cuba: "Skywriting" y "Singing to Cuba." Su tercera novela sobre la persecución contra los periodistas independientes en Cuba está fijada para publicarse en este año, por parte de Harmony/Crown.)

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The Real Y2K Problem

2 Million Prisoners in 2000

By Vincent Schiraldi and Jason Ziedenberg, PNS

Washington, D.C. — Once we dust off our keyboards and realize our computers still work, Americans will have to deal with the real Y2K problem facing this country. By Valentine's Day of the year 2000, America will achieve the dubious distinction of having more than 2 million of its citizens behind bars.

The 1990s could be dubbed "the punishing decade," as the 800,000 jail and prison inmates we added dwarf all previous decades when our incarceration rates rose and fell with changes in our economy and population. America's imprisonment binge has been so massive and so sudden that it is difficult for many people to comprehend, but a few startling facts spell out the scale of what we are doing with our prisons and jails.

America, with less than five percent of the world population, has a quarter of the world's prisoners. There are six times as many Americans behind bars as are imprisoned in the 12 countries that make up the entire European Union, even though those countries have 100 million more citizens than the U.S. Our jails and prisons have literally become the 51st state, with a greater combined population than Alaska, North Dakota and South Dakota. According to one Justice Department survey, one in three African American boys born today will spend some time in prison in their lifetime.

The connection between incarceration and crime is as elusive as the

end of the 1990s as it has been in previous decades. The South continues to be the region of the country with both the highest incarceration rates and the highest crime rates. New York, which led the nation in declining rates of violent crime, had the second slowest growing prison system in the country between 1992 and 1997, and the population of the city's jail system actually declined during that time.

As we enter the new millennium, the ascendance of prisons as our decade's major public works project and social program is a sad but preventable legacy. Although prison expansion is sold on the specter of Jack the Ripper, we are increasingly locking up the Three Stooges. Two-thirds of the inmates in America's prisons and jails — over 1.2 million prisoners — are locked up for non-violent offenses. While the number of violent offenders doubled from 1980, the number of non-violent prisoners has tripled and the number of drug prisoners has increased seven-fold.

The challenge for leaders in the 21st Century will be to restore balance to a system that has overreacted. That will mean creating programs and punishment options — like drug treatment, restitution centers and intensive supervision — which hold less serious offenders accountable for their behavior without crushing them and without breaking the bank.

In the final analysis, the measure of our system should not be how many Americans we lock up, but how few Americans are victimized.

Los Estados Unidos Pasaron Por Alto Una Oportunidad Amistosa Al Ceder El Canal a Panama

Por Ray Rodríguez

Cuando los Estados Unidos cedieron el Canal de Panamá a esa nación en el último día del año 1999, tuvieron una oportunidad singular para enviar un mensaje a todas las naciones de la América Latina: Los días del colonialismo han terminado y nosotros respetamos la soberanía de ustedes y valoramos su amistad.

Sin embargo, en vez de echarle mano al momento y ser magnánimo, el gobierno de Clinton decidió restarle importancia a las ceremonias. Clinton se plegó pusilánimemente bajo los reaccionarios y agresivos de los partidos demócrata y republicano.

Le tocó al ex-Presidente Jimmy Carter el encabezar la delegación de los Estados Unidos

a la ceremonia del 31 de diciembre. Carter tuvo razón para estar orgulloso. Desde que salió de ese cargo, él ha demostrado más carácter que cualquiera de sus predecesores o sucesores.

El ha demostrado en Panamá nuevamente por qué ha merecido todos los elogios que ha recibido. Su estatura eclipsa a las de los pigmeos políticos que ocupan la Casa Blanca y el Departamento de Estado. Siendo ése el caso, fué mejor que Clinton y la Secretaria de Estado, Madeleine Albright, se quedaran aquí.

Los clamores de los pronosticadores de desastres que se opusieron a la cesión del canal a la soberanía panameña me recuerdan las predicciones calamitosas que se escucharon

cuando Inglaterra cedió el Canal de Suez a Egipto. En realidad, la eficacia del Canal de Suez ha aumentado. Hoy se manejan más buques y un mayor tonelaje que nunca antes. Nuevamente, los que dudaban se cocinaron en su propio caldo.

Ahora, según los reaccionarios y agresivos, los panameños son incapaces de administrar cualquier cosa tan compleja como el canal. Eso es basura. Más del 90 por ciento de las tareas diarias de administrar y hacer funcionar el canal ya están siendo efectuadas por panameños.

Nada va a cambiar radicalmente como resultado de la cesión.

Casi 15,000 buques al año continuarán atravesando el canal sin incidentes. Ellos

advertirán poco, si es que algún cambio, al pasar por las esclusas. Los ingresos de más de \$500 millones al año son demasiado vitales para el bienestar de Panamá como para permitir cualquier menoscabo del nivel de servicio.

El temor manifestado de que China obtenga el control del canal a través de una firma comercial es sólo una insensatez. Los alegatos me recuerdan de las tácticas de amedrentamiento que fueron empleadas por dos representantes congresionales de San Diego para echar a pique las gestiones a fin de construir una terminal ampliada para recipientes de carga en Long Beach, California, para una firma china. China se ha convertido en el fantasma de la época posterior a la guerra fría.

IN A GLOBAL ERA WHY WE HUNGER TO BE SMALL

BY RICHARD RODRIGUEZ
PACIFIC NEWS SERVICE

SAN FRANCISCO — In the last days of 1999, Americans had many reasons to feel big. We were in outer space, repairing a telescope to peer into infinity. On Earth we were the world's superpower. On Wall Street, money piled on money. And we were masters of a technology that promised the world: Anything you might want, any time of the day.

But even while Americans were feeling very big, therewere signs that an alternate mood was abroad in the land — call it a hunger for small.

The darkest side of that yearning has been most obvious among the white loners who are united in the forest against the complicated idea of America. More routinely, at American high schools, as we learned from Columbine High, the cafeteria is separated into camps, even while the student body grows spectacularly varied.

Is it possible that the more global, the larger our lives become, the more we will yearn for the small? Will there be more Quebecs, as there are more North America Free Trade Agreements? More chapters of the Crips and the Bloods, as that abstraction we call Southern California extends into the desert?

Parents purchase their son a computer for Christmas. They tell themselves they are giving their child the world; in real time, they are giving him solitude. The child ends up alone in his room, entering chat rooms where he meets people just like himself.

The loudest advertisers of bigness, of course, have been the cyber-rich. They are rich, out of all proportion to the rest of us. In the age of big, they are gigantic.

Last week, Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon.com, Time Magazine's "Man of the Year," was telling us he envisions a retail operation that can offer nearly anything we might ever want. The fawning media never asked Mr. Bezos about the loneliness computers make some people feel — and why it is that the primary business of e-retailing has been pornography.

No matter. In the age of bigness, hype replaces insight. Gossip replaces news. The people who matter are celebrities, people of no matter. And the wisest in the land are billionaires.

Indeed, a recent survey found that a majority of American teenagers expect to be millionaires in their lives. No economics teacher, apparently, has gotten around to teaching them about inflation: what happens to your million dollars when everyone else is a millionaire?

Here in San Francisco, studio apartments currently go at twenty-five hundred dollars a month in my neighborhood. The "utility vehicles" get larger and larger, look like tanks. But there's no place to park.

I know a 20-year-old who has maybe \$30 million. Trouble is, he can't find an apartment. He wants Pacific Heights and a view of the Golden Gate Bridge. He has \$2.1 million to spend on the place. There is nothing available at that price.

Suddenly, there are signs of a counter-mood, call it a new bohemianism, in favor of small. A few weeks ago, you could see it, albeit masked, on the streets of Seattle, during the World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting. Inside the hotels, business executives and government ministers talked global trade. Outside, self-styled "anarchists" took aim at Starbucks. Those masked strangers in Seattle were, in some cases, communards, but they were, I suspect, also children of the American suburb.

They are the ragged edge of a broader middle-class discontent with the large — with sprawl, and the loss of the intimate scale.

Tom Wolfe, the novelist, observes that, driving along a freeway, the way one knows one has left one town and entered another is by the repetition of store signs: Gap. Ross. Costco.

I speak here not as a neutral. In 1999, the small book store in San Francisco in which I was a partner closed its doors. The usual reasons — the superstores and e-retailing. The odd thing, the interesting thing, was that at the party we gave for our customers, several hundred people came and not a few of them wept, wept openly, at the loss of a place downtown where their faces were recognized and their idiosyncratic tastes were remembered, by human beings.

Real estate developers are not oblivious to the hunger for intimate scale. Recently, they have been building malls that resemble faux main streets. Politicians, meanwhile, are speaking of "open spaces," trying to placate an impatience as the traffic slows to three miles an hour.

Who would have guessed that, at the end of a century given to bigness, a daughter of California, Butterfly, would perch in the upper branches of a redwood tree for two years to protect it from being cut down. When she finally relinquished her vigil she was weeping and she knelt to kiss the tree's ancient roots.

In October, I was at an environmentalist meeting in Denver where the entire day was spent talking about the necessity for claiming vast parts of the West as "wilderness." What struck me was that the participants were clearly the winners in today's global economy: The women wore Chanel; the men wore handmade cowboy boots.

There is in the environmental movement, at its very heart, some desire to reverse our relationship with nature. There is a desire to protect nature, so that nature in another way might loom over us.

Bestselling books are written these days about great storms at sea. It's as though, at a time when we have trained Moby Dick to jump for our amusement at Sea World, we yearn to fear the sea. We want to feel small, at sea.

The very rich are spending many thousands of dollars to climb Mt. Everest. Not-so-rich teenagers, devotees of "extreme sports," take their boards and their ropes to the snow or to the water or cliffs' edge. They talk about the exhilaration of falling.

We are left with this paradox: Never have Americans had so many reasons to feel themselves gigantic upon the earth; never have so many Americans wanted to feel themselves dwarfed on the earth.

All last week, I kept thinking of Jonathan Swift's 18th-century satire Gulliver's Travels. In one chapter, Gulliver wakes up to find himself a giant in the world. In another, he finds himself tiny.

Thus did 1999 come to an end with a strange mixture of mood. With all the talk of the stock market and technology, there was also the knowledge that a lone hacker could penetrate big business, big government and our own home computer. With all the talk of globalism, there was also the knowledge that we live in a borderless world, defenseless against a lone terrorist.

In the end, big and small are ratios, each in relationship to the other. California, for example, has more gated communities than any other state, at the same time that California is melting into a global society with the highest rate of miscegenation of any state in the mainland U.S. Small creates big and vice versa.

We are going to have to learn how to balance the two. We are going to have to learn how to balance globalism with the need for an address.

If we continue living in an America only publicly given to the big, we may end up alone, while our children sit in their rooms at computers, in a country owned by three corporations, and threatened always by a hacker who may be our daughter.

El incitar al público y abanicar la hostilidad latente ha sido relativamente fácil, debido a los temores subyacentes y las sospechas que han influenciado tradicionalmente nuestras relaciones con China.

El funcionario de más alto rango del gobierno de Clinton que acompañó a Carter a Panamá fué el Secretario del Ejército, Louis Caldera. Con la Presidencia de Panamá, Mireya Moscoso — que proclamó ante una multitud que vitoreaba y hacía ondear banderas: "Por fin, Panamá ha logrado la soberanía" — Caldera firmó el documento oficial de cesión.

El valor militar estratégico del canal ha disminuido, porque los porta-aviones y submarinos atómicos modernos no lo usan.

Aunque la presencia militar de los Estados Unidos ha sido rebajada en los años recientes, el canal representaba uno de los lugares primordiales de su perímetro de defensa. Determinados a no irse demasiado lejos, una nueva base ha sido construida tranquilamente en las cercanías.

Continued on Page 5

For Latinos, 1999 Was A Very Entertaining Year

By Antonio Mejías-Rentas

The chart-topping successes of Latino recording artists, and a contrasting scarcity of Hispanics on network television, marked the final year of the 20th century. Here are some of the most important events for Latino artists and entertainers during 1999:

MUSIC:

Puerto Rican singer Ricky Martin scored a huge hit in May with his debut English-language album and the single "Livin' la vida loca." It became the first song ever to top the English- and Spanish-language sales charts simultaneously in the United States.

The song and the hype around Martin -- whose bilingualism was showcased with appearances on practically every major network in both languages and in TV specials on Telemundo and CBS -- helped usher in a summer of Latino singers.

Following immediately on the heels of Martin's success were two other Latino bilingual efforts -- both by Puerto Rican singers. Jennifer López, an actress who made history this decade by becoming the first Latina to command over a million dollars for a screen appearance, released "On the 6," her first recording. The album included a duet with

Marc Anthony, one of the salsa genre's best-selling artists, who crossed over successfully to English. All three recordings were released by Columbia or one of its divisions.

The year was also good for veteran Latino performers. Carlos Santana, who took his band on tour with Mexican rock group Maná, scored his biggest hit in more than two decades with the release of his album "Supernatural." And Celia Cruz, who left label RMM after 25 years, earned the ASCAP Heritage Award at a May ceremony in New York.

The sudden surge of Latin music moved the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences and its newly created Latin Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences to schedule its first-ever Latin Grammy awards ceremony in 2000 -- a full year ahead of what had originally been anticipated.

In June, NARAS also announced that it was splitting up the "Tropical Latin" category of its Grammy award into three: salsa, merengue and traditional tropical.

Not even the Latin Grammy could escape the ongoing controversy over Cuban musicians performing in South Florida. NARAS and LARAS decided last month to hold the

ceremony in Los Angeles instead, because of a Miami/Dade County ordinance against Cuban performers.

In October, a Miami performance by the seminal Cuban band Los Van Van brought protests from members of the Cuban exile community and a move by county officials to ask the State Department to deny the band a visa for a planned concert this month.

ART AND STAGE:

In April, actor Edward James Olmos unveiled "Americanos: Latino Life in the United States," a multimedia project that includes a traveling photo exhibit, a book, a documentary and a CD.

The show of some 120 photographs commissioned for the project began at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., and moved to New York in September.

In May, Eduardo Galeano became the first recipient of the Cultural Freedom Prize, a gift of \$250,000 from the Lannan Foundation to the Uruguayan writer and \$100,000 to cultural charities of his choice.

Two other figures received prestigious awards in 1999: Sor Isolina Ferré, a Puerto Rican nun whose community centers teach photography and manual arts to New York City teens, received the Presidential Medal

of Freedom in August; and Tejano singer Lydia Mendoza got the National Medal of Arts in September.

In November, producers of "Selena Forever" completed national auditions for the musical based on the life of the singer Selena Quintanilla Pérez. It is expected to open in San Antonio on the fifth anniversary of her death, in April 2000, and then go on the road and possibly Broadway.

Back on the Great White Way the same month was "Tango Forever," which returned to the same stage where it was a big hit in 1985.

In Costa Mesa, Calif., last June, the South Coast Repertory held its second annual Pacific Playwrights Festival, incorporating the 14th annual Hispanic Playwrights Project. New works by several Latino writers were featured.

Next: Latinos' greatest 1999 film and television successes, and an accounting of the passing of numerous major Latino arts and entertainment figures.

(Antonio Mejías-Rentas writes a weekly entertainment column for Hispanic Link News Service and covers the field for other national media.)

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Carlos Santana Receives Host of Gammy Nominations

LOS ANGELES, - Mexican American music legend Carlos Santana has received a host of Grammy Award nominations, as have other notable Hispanic artists such as Puerto Rican Ricky Martin and Christina Aguilera.



Santana, 52, received 10 nominations, including Album of the Year for "Supernatural," which sold 4.6 million copies and helped him regain his place at the top of the U.S. music industry.

Other records nominated for Album of the Year include: "Millennium," by the Backstreet Boys; "Fly," by the Dixie Chicks; "When I Look in Your Eyes," by Canadian singer Diana Krall; and "Fanmail," by the trio TLC.

Ricky Martin was nominated in the Record of the Year category for his hit "Livin' la Vida Loca," while Christina Aguilera is a nominee in the Best New Artist category.

Martin is facing fierce competition from the Backstreet Boys' hit "I Want It That Way," and from the veteran Santana with "Smooth," as well as Cher with "Believe," and TLC with "No Scrubs."

Nominations for Song of the Year include: "Livin' la Vida Loca" (Ricky Martin); "I Want It That Way" (Backstreet Boys); "Smooth" (Santana); "Unpretty" (TLC); and "You've Got a Way" (Shania Twain).

The trio TLC received six nominations, second only to guitarist Carlos Santana.

The Grammy Awards will be decided by some 10,000 members of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS) and will be revealed at the Grammy Awards ceremony to be held on Feb. 23 at the Staples Center in Los Angeles.

Latinos Dominate Grammy Nominations

By MELANIE FELICIANO

The National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences officially recognized the phenomenon that took over mainstream music last year by nominating Latinos for at least 47 Grammy awards.

For the first time in history, Latinos dominate non-Latin categories including Record of the Year, Best New Artist and Best Dance Recording.

The new Latin wave including Ricky Martin, Jennifer Lopez, Christina Aguilera, Marc Anthony and others have all proved themselves Grammy-worthy, but old-school Latino rockero Carlos Santana is king, garnering 10 Grammy nominations.

Para Los Latinos, 1999 Fue Un Año Muy Entretenido

Por Antonio Mejías-Rentas

Los éxitos de lugar preferente de los artistas latinos de las grabaciones y una escasez contrastante de hispanos en las redes de televisión señalaron al año 1999. He aquí algunos de los acontecimientos más importantes para los artistas y animadores latinos durante 1999:

MUSICA:

El cantante puertorriqueño Ricky Martin se anotó una marca enorme en mayo con su debut en un álbum en inglés y la pieza titulada "Livin' la vida loca." Esta se convirtió en la primera canción que haya alcanzado alguna vez el primer lugar en las ventas de grabaciones simultáneas en inglés y español en los Estados Unidos.

La canción y la algarabía alrededor de Martin -- cuyo bilingüismo fué destacado con apariciones en todas las redes televisoras prácticamente, en ambos idiomas, así como en programas especiales de televisión por Telemundo y CBS -- ayudaron a recibir un verano de cantantes latinos.

Siguieron inmediatamente a la zaga del éxito de Martin otros dos esfuerzos latinos bilingües -- ambos de cantantes puertorriqueños. Jennifer López, una actriz que hizo historia en este decenio al convertirse en la primera latina que lograra más de un millón de dólares por una aparición en la pantalla, publicó "On the 6," su primera grabación. El álbum incluyó un dueto con Marc Anthony, uno de los artistas de mayores ventas del género de salsa, que atravesó con éxito hacia el inglés. Todas esas tres grabaciones fueron publicadas por Columbia o una de sus divisiones.

El año fué bueno también para los ejecutantes latinos veteranos. Carlos Santana, que llevó a su banda de viaje con el grupo mexicano de "rock" Maná, se apuntó su mejor marca en más de dos decenios con la publicación de su álbum "Supernatural." Y Celia Cruz, que abandonó la etiqueta RMM después de 25 años, ganó el Galardón ASCAP de Herencia en una ceremonia de mayo en Nueva York.

El ascenso súbito de la música latina movió a la Academia Nacional de las Artes y Ciencias de Grabación (NARAS en inglés) y a su recién creada Academia

And it wasn't just Latino artists who made the cut, but the Latino sound as well. German native Lou Bega earned a nomination for his very Latino "Mambo No. 5 (A Little Bit Of...)" in the Best Male Pop Vocal Performance. The academy also added the best of salsa and merengue to the traditional Latin categories.

The following is a list of all the Latin talent in non-Latin categories. For a comprehensive list of Grammy nominations, go to The 42nd Grammy Awards Webcast.

Record of the Year
Ricky Martin -- "Livin' la Vida Loca"

Santana -- "Smooth"

Album of the Year

Santana -- "Supernatural"
Song of the Year
Ricky Martin -- "Livin' la Vida Loca"

Santana -- "Smooth"
Best New Artist
Christina Aguilera

Best Female Pop Vocal Performance
Christina Aguilera -- "Genie In A Bottle"

Best Male Pop Vocal Performer
Marc Anthony -- "I Need to Know"

Ricky Martin -- "Livin' la Vida Loca"

Best Pop Performance By A Duo Or Group With Vocal
Santana -- "Maria Maria"

Best Pop Collaboration With Vocals
Gloria Estefan & N Sync -- "Music Of My Heart"

Santana Featuring Dave Matthews -- "Love Of My Life"

Santana Featuring Rob Thomas -- "Smooth"

Best Pop Instrumental Performance
Santana -- "El Farol"

Best Dance Recording
Gloria Estefan -- "Don't Let This Moment End"
Jennifer Lopez -- "Waiting For Tonight"

Best Pop Album
Ricky Martin -- "Ricky Martin"

Best Rock Performance By A Duo Or Group With Vocal
Santana Featuring Everlast -- "Put Your Lights On"

Best Rock Instrumental Performance
Santana Featuring Eric Clapton -- "The Calling"

Best Rock Album
Santana -- "Supernatural"

Best Country Collaboration With Vocals
Linda Ronstadt, Emmylou Harris & Dolly Parton -- "After The Gold Rush"

Best Country Album
Linda Ronstadt, Emmylou Harris & Dolly Parton -- "Trio II"

Best Jazz Instrumental Performance, Individual or Group
Gonzalo Rubalcaba -- "Inner Voyage"

Best Large Jazz Ensemble Performance
Vince Mendoza -- "Epiphany"

The History of Santana Reminds Me of the Nicene Creed...or How Carlos Resurrected on the Third Day

Elvira Gómez

Carlos Santana was just nominated for 10 Grammy Awards for Supernatural, his latest album and the prize album the band has produced in 7 years. Supernatural, one of the best and most complete albums that I have heard recently, was done in collaboration with a variety of today's most talented artists and has sold more than 4.6 million copies in the U.S. -- not to mention its international sales. The album is nominated in the most important categories of the Awards show such as Album of the Year and Song of the Year for "Smooth," the single recorded with Rob Thomas from Matchbox 20.

Eternally begotten of the Father before the beginning of time, Carlos Santana started to make history in 1966 with his legendary band Santana, formed with the vocalist and keyboarder Gregg Rolie. The band (and

Carlos, of course) reigned in the 70s when their album Abraxas became a major hit placing "Black Magic Woman" and "Oye Como Va" at the top of the music charts. Yet, after Abraxas, the history of Santana has almost biblical connotations. With a band that continually changed members, with albums that varied in quality, and without any major success, Santana suffered, died, and was buried. And then Carlos descended into hell with his album Beyond Appearances (1987).

We all know, though, that he rose on the third day to dominate the Grammy Award nominations. I don't doubt that he, the God of Guitar, Ambassador of the World's Music, Santana, will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead on February 23, when the 42nd Grammy Awards take place.



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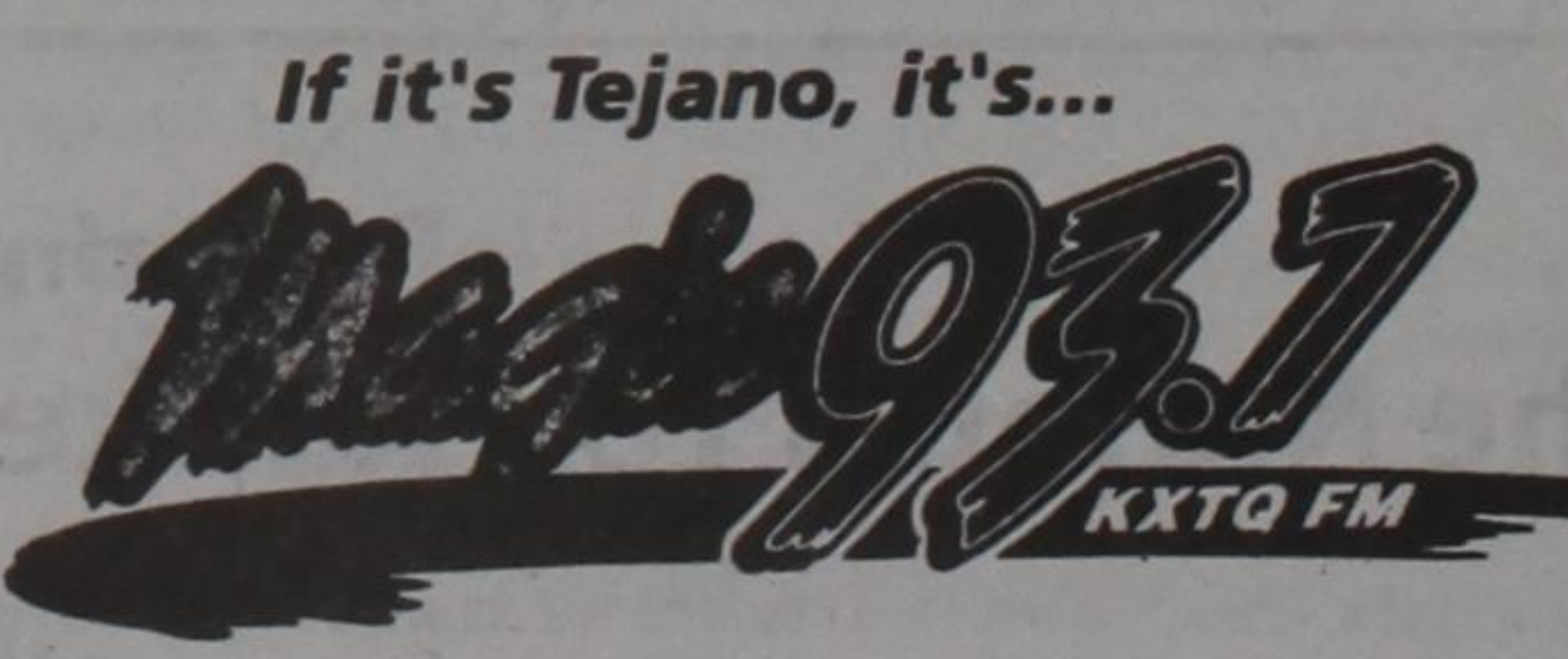
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El Padre De Trinidad Critica A De La Hoya

Ruth E. Hernández Beltrán

El padre y entrenador del campeón mundial del peso "welter" Félix "Tito" Trinidad ha criticado a Oscar de la Hoya por rechazar la oferta que le brindaron para pelear con su hijo el próximo mes de marzo.

Félix Trinidad señaló que Oscar de la Hoya es consciente de que el púgil puertorriqueño subirá de peso en varios meses, por lo que estaría tratando de ganar tiempo para que el título vuelva a sus manos sin tener que enfrentarse de nuevo al boricua.

"No aprovechó la oportunidad que le dio Tito, el pasado lunes 13, para pelear por el título. Le dijimos que es la última pelea que haría Tito en los 66 kilos (147 libras)", explicó el entrenador al referirse al anuncio que ya hizo el puertorriqueño de que buscará, a mediados del año 2000, el título super welter de los 69 kilos.

Indicó, no obstante, que todavía existe alguna posibilidad de que se produzca la esperada revancha de Trinidad y de la Hoya.

"Todavía hay oportunidad porque nosotros no rechazamos a de la Hoya. Tito demostró que es el mejor y seguirá siendo mejor que él", afirmó. Agregó que de la Hoya sólo busca ganar tiempo con su negativa a aceptar la propuesta de Tito Trinidad y que "por eso no quieren pelear en marzo".

De la Hoya manifestó que está dispuesto a pelear con Trinidad si la pelea tiene lugar en junio, pero el puertorriqueño respondió que debe aceptar sus condiciones porque él es ahora el campeón.

Según el entrenador, de la Hoya está retrasando su encuentro con Trinidad en espera de que éste defienda su corona welter en marzo del



próximo año y que luego la deje vacante para subir de peso, lo que podría suceder hacia junio del 2000.

"Creo que está dando tiempo al tiempo con el fin de que Tito deje la corona y que José Sulaimán (presidente del CMB) se la dé a de la Hoya sin pelear. Esa es la alternativa número uno por la cual está retrasando la pelea", opinó el padre de Trinidad.

Oscar de la Hoya anunció la pasada semana que peleará el 26 de febrero contra Derrell Coley,

el segundo rival obligatorio y que ocupa el segundo puesto en la clasificación del Consejo Mundial de Boxeo, organismo que ha exigido a Trinidad que defienda su título antes de subir de peso.

Ahora, Trinidad espera la decisión del CMB para tomar

una decisión sobre la pelea del puertorriqueño y según explicó su padre, acatarán lo que decida el organismo "siempre y cuando se tome la decisión en base al reglamento que ellos mismos han hecho".

"La pelea será con quien el Consejo ponga como primer aspirante y contra él defenderá Tito la corona", afirmó Trinidad, quien no quiso especular sobre el nombre del posible rival y aseguró que su hijo subirá al cuadrilátero "en perfectas condiciones".

"Este ha sido el mejor año de mi carrera y le doy gracias a Dios por haber logrado tres peleas importantes: Pernell Whitaker en febrero, Hugo Pineda en mayo y Oscar de la Hoya en septiembre y todas fueron peleas muy grandes, muy buenas", dijo Tito Trinidad. EFE

Tests showed in August the disease had at least been brought to the stage of temporary remission, but more treatments were necessary. He left the hospital Nov. 22 and continued receiving treatments as an outpatient.

Landry, the third-winningest coach in NFL history, guided Dallas to five Super Bowls and two championships from the team's inception in 1960 until Jerry Jones fired him after the 1988 season.

His record over 29 seasons was 270-178-6. He was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1990.

Landry Remains Hospitalized In Dallas

DALLAS -- Former Dallas Cowboys coach Tom Landry remained in the hospital Wednesday -- after a month at home -- diagnosed with a form of leukemia.

Landry, 75, is being treated at Baylor University Medical Center. The hospital, at the family's request, released no further information.

Landry has been under treatment since May for acute myelogenous leukemia, also known as AML, a cancer that

impairs the production of blood cells.

Jim Myers, one of Landry's assistant coaches in 1962-86, quoted a Landry family member as saying Tuesday that the longtime coach had an infection that was under control.

"I think he's getting along pretty good," Myers told the Fort Worth Star-Telegram. "Well, they still haven't gotten the thing in remission. That's the biggest problem they've had all along."



TOP ROW

LEFT TO RIGHT - IRA HERRERA, JOHN CHAVARRIA, MICHAEL CHAVARRIA, TONY MARTINEZ, MICHAEL SANEZ, DANIEL KONSTVEDT, DIMAS HERNANDEZ

BOTTOM ROW

LEFT TO RIGHT - ZACKARY RODRIGUEZ, DYLAN PHARES, BILLY KOONTZ, MOSES FLORES ANDREW SOWDER, ZAKARL WADLEY

Cowboys Remember Leading Vikes 17-0, Not Losing 27-17

IRVING, Texas -- Optimism can come from anywhere. For the Dallas Cowboys, it's in the rubble of a 27-17 loss to the Minnesota Vikings two months ago.

Rather than dwelling on the final score, the Cowboys are preparing to play the Vikings again by focusing on the 17-0 lead they held before Emmitt Smith broke his hand and Troy Aikman suffered a concussion.

"We will not go in there with a woe-is-us attitude," Dallas coach Chan Gailey said Tuesday. "We're the underdogs, we understand that, but we've been up there and played well. We didn't finish the game like we needed to, but we did play well."

The Cowboys (8-8) and Vikings (10-6) meet again in the Metrodome on Sunday in an NFC wild-card game. Minnesota is favored by seven points, the biggest spread of all four first-round games.

Dallas has earned its lack of respect by playing horribly in December -- and not much better in October and November.

The Nov. 8 game against the Vikings typified the Cowboys' season.

They looked great for the first quarter and a half to go ahead 17-0, then suffered a pair of severe injuries and committed

enough penalties and turnovers to gag their way to another loss.

Dallas had done much of the same the previous week in turning a 17-3 lead over Indianapolis into a 34-24 loss. Those back-to-back 10-point losses were the season's worst and hurt even more because they came after double-digit leads.

Yet as the Cowboys try gearing up for the playoffs, they're only remembering the positives of those games to erase their negatives, such as a seven-game road losing streak.

They're also trying to convince themselves they won't follow the fate of the previous three 8-8 teams to make the playoffs, none of whom won a game.

"We've been inconsistent," Smith said. "When we've been consistent, we've dominated games. That could be scary because if you ever develop that consistency, you can go a long way."

Against Minnesota, Smith had 140 yards on 13 carries just 24 minutes into the game when he broke his right hand in the face mask of a defensive back he was stiff-arming during a 63-yard touchdown run.

Smith actually carried the ball once more for a 24-yard touchdown before leaving for X-

rays. What he thought was going to be the best game of his career -- and possibly one of the best in NFL history -- ended up being a huge what-if.

"It was a great night, even though for only a half," Smith said. "I hope we start where we left off. Will they give us 17 points again? I hope so."

The Cowboys scored all 17 points in the first nine minutes of the second quarter. In the first quarter, Richie Cunningham missed kicks of 42 and 37 yards on Dallas' first two drives.

"We have to feel pretty good walking into that arena because we could've been ahead 23-0," Gailey said. "I won't have to tell the players anything. They can put the tape on and see what happened, how we played."

A fumbled snap by Aikman set up Minnesota's first touchdown and the comeback was on.

The Vikings got within 17-10 with a field goal on their first drive of the third quarter, then Aikman was lost on the next possession when a sack by Jerry Ball left the quarterback with his second concussion in as many weeks.

After another Minnesota field goal made it 17-13, Dallas safety George Teague seemed to have preserved the lead with an interception. But an illegal contact penalty against Deion Sanders let the Vikings keep the ball and they went on to score the go-ahead touchdown. The Cowboys never threatened again.

"We've played well enough to have leads, but not well enough to finish," Gailey said. "We've got to concentrate each day on what it takes to finish. That's our focus."

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El Editor, Lubbock, Tx, January 6, 2000

Aumenta Cifra Anual De Inmigrantes Indocumentados en EEUU

Washington, - El Servicio de Inmigración de EEUU (INS) calcula que más de cinco millones de inmigrantes indocumentados, en su mayoría mexicanos, residen en este país, y que esa cifra tiende a aumentar cada año a pesar de los estrictos controles en todos los puntos de ingreso.



El INS difundió este fin de semana las últimas estadísticas de que dispone sobre sus estimaciones acerca de la cantidad de extranjeros que ingresan ilegalmente en Estados Unidos, y que muestran la actividad en este sentido durante el año fiscal 1997, que finalizó el 30 de septiembre de 1998.

Según esta institución, encargada de mantener impermeables las fronteras estadounidenses contra el flujo de personas de otros países que buscan el llamado "sueño americano" sin cumplir los requisitos migratorios de ley, de esos más de cinco millones de indocumentados unos 2,7 millones son mexicanos.

De esos 2,7 millones, el 16 por ciento habían obtenido visado, pero se quedaron en este país después de caducar ese permiso.

Un 26 por ciento de los más de cinco millones de inmigrantes ilegales en el territorio estadounidense proceden de la región centroamericana.

El Servicio de Inmigración estima que anualmente entran sin documentos migratorios unos 275.000 ciudadanos de otros países, aún cuando se ha incrementado la vigilancia en todos los puntos de entrada e instalado equipo moderno de detección en la línea divisora con México y Canadá.

Además, como parte de los planes de endurecimiento de los controles en los centros de ingreso aéreos, marítimos y terrestres, el INS está incrementando progresivamente el número de agentes de la Patrulla de Frontera hasta superar los 8.000, y cuenta con detectores especiales de documentos falsos.

Aun cuando el flujo anual de indocumentados es considerable,

From Page 1

In fact, the majority of the Anglo community in Miami is in favor of having the boy reunited with his father, said Lerner.

There are many others who share that view. San Francisco Bay Area documentary filmmaker Gabriela Quirós agreed with the INS decision to return Elián to his father, arguing that "the father should have priority over any other family member."

At the same time, Quirós expressed deep chagrin over the way both Cuba and the United States have handled the case. "I think it's just frightening the way the case has been politicized by both sides," said Quirós. "And I think it's just as frightening for him to go back as it is for him to stay."

But in Miami, even many who thought Elián's return to his father was likely to happen were surprised by the timing of the INS ruling. "We were all waiting for the decision to be taken on January 21," said Miami pharmacist América Valdéz, who added: "I don't understand why in making the decision they didn't think a little bit about his mother, who drowned to bring him to the United States."

Meanwhile, according to CNN reports, the Cuban boy's U.S. relatives and their lawyers in Miami have vowed to fight the INS's decision. Attorney Spencer Eig called the INS ruling unfair, unprecedented and unconstitutional. He and his colleagues said they were "prepared to file various writs to protect Elián's rights" in court.

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las autoridades de inmigración de EEUU opinan que la cifra estimada de 275.000 cada año es relativamente baja comparada con los niveles que alcanzó en 1994, que fue superior a los 300.000.

California es el estado norteamericano que encabeza la población de inmigrantes

ilegales del país, con dos millones, o sea el 40 por ciento del total general calculado.

Le sigue Texas, con casi 800.000; Nueva York, con unos 600.000; Florida, cerca de 400.000; Illinois 300.000; Nueva Jersey unos 200.000 y Arizona, con alrededor de 150.000.

La entidad ha explicado que estas cantidades ya han sido superadas, y que es realmente difícil saber a ciencia cierta cuántos nacionales de otros países se encuentran en esta situación en Estados Unidos.

Las últimas estadísticas publicadas este fin de semana por el INS revelan que la población mexicana de indocumentados ha crecido en este país en un promedio anual de 150.000 desde 1988.

La gran mayoría de los inmigrantes indocumentados -el 80 por ciento-, proceden de países del hemisferio occidental.

Después de México, el mayor número de extranjeros que residen ilegalmente en Estados Unidos son originarios de El Salvador (más de 335.000), Guatemala (165.000), Canadá (120.000), Haití (105.000), Honduras (90.000), República Dominicana (75.000), Nicaragua (70.000) y Colombia (65.000).

También figuran alrededor de 60.000 ecuatorianos y 30.000 peruanos, además de decenas de miles de Filipinas, Polonia, Jamaica, Pakistán, Irlanda y otros siete países incluida la India.

Estas cifras no son el reflejo pleno de la realidad y están basadas en cálculos determinados por medio de una combinación de estadísticas, por año de entrada, ya que un buen porcentaje de los actuales inmigrantes indocumentados se quedaron en este país al caducar sus visados, indica el INS.

Latinos Entretenido From Page 3

ciudad de Nueva York, recibió la Medalla Presidencial de la Libertad en agosto, y la cantante de música tejana Lydia Mendoza recibió la Medalla Nacional de las Artes en septiembre.

En noviembre, los productores de "Selena Para Siempre" terminaron las adiciones nacionales para la revista musical basada en la vida de la cantante Selena Quintanilla Pérez.Se espera que sea inaugurada en San Antonio en el quinto aniversario de su muerte, abril de este año 2000, y después salga de viaje posiblemente hasta Broadway.

De regreso en la Gran Vía Blanca, en el mismo mes, estuvo "El Tango para Siempre," que regresó al mismo escenario donde fué un gran éxito en 1985.

Tuvo lugar en junio en Costa Mesa, California, auspiciado por la compañía South Coast Repertory el segundo Festival Anual del Pacífico de Dramaturgos, que también incluyó su 14 Proyecto Anual de Dramaturgos Hispánicos. Se presentaron varias obras nuevas por diversos autores latinos.

Próximamente: los sucesos más importantes en cine, televisión, y los decesos de figururas de las artes y los espectáculos en 1999.

(Antonio Mejías-Rentas escribe una columna semanal sobre las diversiones para Hispanic Link News Service e informa sobre esos asuntos para otros medios informativos nacionales.)

Propiedad literaria registrada por Hispanic Link News Service en el año 2000. Distribuido por Los Angeles Times Syndicate

Tejano Conjunto Festival, 2000 Poster Contest

Attention visual artists! The Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center wants you to participate in the Nineteenth Annual Tejano Conjunto Festival en San Antonio, 2000 Juried Poster Contest. Works will be judged

Census Bureau Starts Programs to Educate Hispanics on Census

Los Angeles.-The U.S. Census Bureau has initiated two educational programs, using Spanish-language materials, in southern California to encourage Hispanic participation in the census, the enumeration for which is set to begin April 1.

Both programs include videos, printed material and the song "Yo cuento" ("I count"), aimed at elementary school children. The programs emphasize the importance of participating in the census to ensure the future of the Hispanic community in the United States.

Hispanic children will receive, as part of their classes, materials in Spanish from the Census Bureau with information on how a census is carried out.

The first program will be realized in southern Los Angeles, in Orange County, and the city of Santa Ana in upcoming weeks.

The president of the Santa Ana school district board of directors, John Palacio, said they decided to implement the programs in public schools because "in effect, many parents receive census information from what their children learn in school."

"Our experience shows that that is one of the best ways to reach parents who have a limited knowledge of English," Palacio said.

As of February, teachers in southern California will give their students the information prepared by the Census Bureau.

Census officials also asked teachers, from nursery school to high school, to include the census in classroom activities.

Various Hispanic organizations, such as the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), have teamed up with the census campaign, distributing thousands of copies of Spanish-language instructional videos to Hispanic immigrants.

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in four categories: Junior High School, High School, College, and Open.

The artist whose work is selected as the overall winner will receive a \$2000 cash award. Additional cash awards include \$100 for top selection in each category and \$50 for Honorable mention in each category. The winning selection will be used

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Disability Advisory Committee Vacancy

The Lubbock Public Transit Advisory Board would like to announce a vancancy on the Disability Advisory Committee (DAC). The DAC is a subcommittee which reviews policies and regulations and advises the Lubbock Public Transit Advisory Board on issues related to the provision of public transportation service for individuals with disabilities. Citibus is the local transportation provider for the City of Lubbock.

All interested individuals willing to serve on this committee may submit a letter of interest and resume, or other biographical information, by 5:00 p.m., January 18, 2000 to Citibus, P.O.box 2000, Lubbock, Texas 79457. The Lubbock Public Transit Advisory Board will appoint a new committee member to the DAC at the January 25th Board Meeting. If you have any questions, please contact Shannon Garrett at Citibus (806) 767-2380 ext. 222.

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Paid for by Rick Lujan

as the official poster for the Tejano Conjunto Festival en San Antonio, 2000. All works must be submitted to the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center, 1300 Guadalupe St. San Antonio, Texas 78207 by February 18, 2000 at 5:30pm.

The works submitted must be 22 inches by 28 inches (22"x 28") in the portrait layout. The theme must be Conjunto music, that unique Tex-Mex musical form that uses the three-row button accordion as its principle instrument.

The words TEJANO CONJUNTO FESTIVAL EN SAN ANTONIO, 2000 must be placed within the artwork. The medium used is left to the discretion of the artist, but remember that we are looking for a colorful, graphic and visual interpretation of Conjunto music which will be reproduced and distributed as the official poster of the Tejano Conjunto Festival en San Antonio, 2000. The Nineteenth Annual

Page 5

Tejano Conjunto Festival en San Antonio, 2000 will be held from May 9-14, 2000 at the Guadalupe Theater and Rosedale Park and will feature six days and 30 of the best Conjuntos in the nation.

The Tejano Conjunto Festival en San Antonio is sponsored by the City of San Antonio Office of Cultural Affairs, National Endowment for the Arts, Budweiser/BudCo, Inc., Gabbanelli, Inc., Hohner, Inc. KWEX TV Channel 41, and the San Antonio Express-News.

El Editor

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U.S. Missed A Neighborly Opportunity In Ceding Canal To Panama

By Ray Rodríguez

When the United States transferred the Panama Canal to Panama on the final day of 1999, it had a unique opportunity to send a message to all of the Latin American countries: The days of colonialism are over, and we respect your sovereignty and value your friendship.

However, rather than seizing the moment and being magnanimous, the Clinton administration chose to downplay the ceremonies. President Bill Clinton cravenly buckled under to the jingoists in the Democratic and Republican parties.

It fell to a former president, Jimmy Carter, to lead the U.S. delegation at the Dec. 31 ceremony. Carter did himself proud! Since leaving office, he has demonstrated more character than any of his predecessors or successors.

In Panama he demonstrated once again why all the accolades he has received are so richly deserved. His stature dwarfs the political pygmies occupying the White House and the State Department. That being the case, maybe it was best for Clinton and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to stay home.

The cries of the doomsayers who opposed transferring the canal to Panamanian sovereignty remind me of the

dire predictions heard when England transferred the Suez Canal to Egypt. In actuality, the efficiency of the Suez Canal has improved. More tonnage and ships are being handled today than ever before. Once again, the doubters were left to stew.

Now, according to the jingoists, the Panamanians are incapable of operating anything as complex as the canal. That's hogwash. More than 90 percent of the day-to-day tasks of managing and operating the canal are already being done by Panamanians.

Nothing is going to change radically as a result of the transfer. Nearly 15,000 ships a year will continue to traverse the canal without incident. They will notice little if any change passing through the locks. The revenue of more than \$500 million a year is too vital to Panama's well-being to permit any deterioration in the level of service.

The expressed fear that China would gain control of the canal through a business firm is sheer nonsense. The allegations remind me of the scare tactics that were used by two congressional representatives from San Diego to scuttle the efforts to built an expanded container terminal in Long Beach, Calif., for a Chinese firm. China has become the convenient bogeyman of the

post-Cold War era. Inciting the public and fanning latent hostility has been relatively easy due to the underlying fears and suspicions that have traditionally influenced our relations with China.

The highest-ranking official of the Clinton administration to accompanying Carter to Panama was U.S. Army Secretary Louis Caldera. With Panama President Mireya Moscoso -- who proclaimed to a cheering, flag-waving crowd, "At last Panama has reached sovereignty" -- Caldera signed the official transfer document.

The canal's strategic military value has diminished because modern carrier task forces and nuclear submarines do not use it.

Although the U.S. military's presence has been trimmed in recent years, the canal represented one of the prime sites in its defense perimeter. Determined not to go too far away, the United States is quietly building a new base nearby.

There is ample global precedence for returning territory to its rightful owners. In 1946, we granted the Philippine Islands their independence. England granted India, the crown jewel of the British Empire, its independence; Hong Kong has reverted to Chinese rule. And

Portugal recently ceded the colony of Macao, which it had ruled for more than 200 years, back to China.

Will we someday give Guantanamo back to Cuba?

Due to the Vieques bombing incident, the flames of independence are being fanned in Puerto Rico. Could this be the portent of things to come?

Why not? Many overseas possessions no longer serve a useful purpose. Originally, they were vital as coaling stations to steam-driven navies, the paramount sign of power and status among emerging nations. Now, for all intents and purposes, coaling stations are obsolete. Navies steam worldwide unimpeded by the necessity of having to stop and refuel.

Ceding the canal back to Panama is simply a recognition of the fact that, despite fossilized thinking, the world has changed. The need for colonialism along with gunboat diplomacy has passed.

That is the message Clinton should have sent to our friends and neighbors in Latin America as we entered the new millennium.

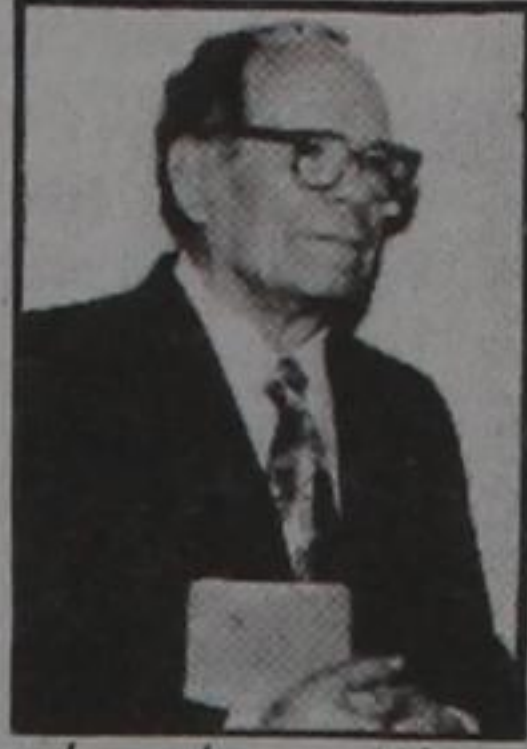
(Raymond Rodríguez, of Long Beach, Calif., is a retired university professor. He writes a weekly column for the Long Beach Press-Telegram.)

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PENSAMIENTOS DEL PREDICADOR

Por Pastor: Frank García
Lubbock, Texas

NICODEMO, VISITA A JESUS DE NOCHE
Y HABIA UN HOMBRE DE LOS FARISEOS QUE SE LLAMABA NICODEMO. ESTE VINO A JESUS DE NOCHE.
SAN JUAN 3:1-2



Como fariseo, Nicodemo ocupaba un lugar respetable entre los judíos. Y a diferencia de los saduceos, que aceptaban una interpretación más flexible de la ley de Moisés, pero los fariseos trataban de evitar la más mínima de las transgresiones. Y por ello, el pueblo respataba mucho a los fariseos por su celo religioso. Los saduceos se adaptaban más al gobierno gentil, pero los fariseos lo rechazaban. Nicodemo también era miembro del sanedrín, el concilio encargado de administrar las leyes religiosas de Israel, leyes que abarcaban muchas cuestiones civiles o penales. Además Nicodemo era "maestro de Israel" Juan 3:10, así que se destacaba aun entre los rabíes. ¿Porqué procuraría hablar con Jesús un hombre tan importante? Aunque no sabemos la razón precisa por la que Nicodemo fue a ver a Jesús, al parecer Nicodemo se sintió atraído a Jesús, gracias a los milagros que había hecho Jesús. Pues esos milagros le probaron a Nicodemo que Jesucristo había venido de Dios. Tal vez Nicodemo tuviera hambre espiritual y tal vez comprendió que Jesús satisfaría su hambre. Y además, parece que Nicodemo estaba dispuesto a aceptar lo que Jesús le diría y aceptar la verdad. Quizá quería saber si Jesús era de veras el Mesías. En San Juan 3:3, Jesús le respondió a Nicodemo: "El que no naciere de nuevo, no puede ver el reino de Dis." Y luego Jesús usó las palabras "De cierto, de cierto te digo" para presentar sus más solemnes e importantes declaraciones. Esas palabras confirmaban y subrayaban que las palabras de Cristo eran dignas de confianza e importantes. Aunque es evidente que Nicodemo se concentraba en la cuestión de nacer por segunda vez, pero Jesús estaba indicando el carácter espiritual de ese nuevo nacimiento. Pues el nacer de nuestra justicia sin Dios "es como trapo de inmundicia" según Isa.66:6. Y Rom. 3:9 nos dice que "judíos y gentiles están bajo de pecado." Sólo quienes han sido transformados por el poder de Cristo pueden entrar en el reino de Dios. Cuando nacemos de nuevo, cambia por completo nuestro concepto de Dios, del pecado, de la salvación y de la vida. Y el nuevo nacimiento es el único camino hacia el reino de Dios. Según la enseñanza judía, todos los judíos serían admitidos en el reino de Dios cuando llegaran porque eran hijos de Araham. Y Jesús no reprendió a Nicodemo por su falta de conocimiento. Pero que más bien Jesús le explicó el nuevo nacimiento. Afín de mostrarle a Nicodemo que estaba refinándose al nacimiento natural, Jesús aclaró algo más: la carne sólo puede producir carne. Pero nuestros esfuerzos humanos no pueden producir vida espiritual. Sólo el Espíritu Santo puede producir un nacimiento sobrenatural y darle vida espiritual a la persona. Pues el Espíritu Santo transforma las vidas de las personas cuando aceptan a Cristo como Salvador. Una vida transformada es la mayor prueba del poder de Dios.

menores se unen Irán, Pakistán, Yemén, Arabia Saudita y Nigeria.

Desde 1976, de las 30 ejecuciones de reos que entraron a la cárcel cuando eran adolescentes, seis son Texas y 4 de ellas se llevaron a cabo bajo el mandato del gobernador George W. Bush, aspirante republicano a la presidencia de EEUU.

Bush es el gobernador que más ejecuciones ha firmado en la historia de Estados Unidos, un total de 112 desde 1995.

Texas comenzará el año de ejecuciones el 12 de enero a las 6 de la tarde cuando el equipo médico aplique una inyección letal a Earl Heinselbetz.

Heinselbetz se convertirá en el ejecutado número 200 en Texas desde 1982, año en que se realizó la primera ejecución en ese estado tras la reinstauración de este castigo en 1976 por el Tribunal Supremo.

El ritmo de ejecuciones ha aumentado en Texas, estado que obtuvo el nivel máximo de 37 ejecuciones en 1997. Virginia y Texas suman el 45 por ciento del total de las 598 ejecuciones realizadas desde 1976 en el país.

En 1997, se ejecutaron a las personas que estaban programadas para morir en 1996 debido a una demanda presentada por Proyecto de Derechos Civiles de Texas ante el Tribunal Supremo.

Los demandantes afirmaron que era inconstitucional la reducción del proceso de apelación, aprobado por la legislatura texana para agilizar las ejecuciones. La resolución

fue negativa y las ejecuciones que se quedaron a la espera se realizaron en 1997.

En 1999 se ejecutaron en Texas a 35 personas, entre menores de edad, enfermos mentales, personas con retraso mental y extranjeros.

Precisamente, abogados de algunos extranjeros consideran que Estados Unidos o sus gobiernos locales han violado la Convención de Viena, al no informar a los reos de su derecho a acudir a sus respectivos consulados.

Para algunos familiares de los condenados -como Brenda Elizalde, Blanca Ayestes o Alma Tamayo- lo más desesperante de recibir el nuevo milenio es, como dice una de ellas, "saber que la pena de muerte continúa aplicándose y que nuestros seres queridos siguen ahí porque no han sido juzgados justamente".

Así, el 31 de diciembre a las 6 de la tarde -hora de las ejecuciones en Huntsville (Texas)- los reos Fredy Elizalde, Carlos Ayestes y Edgar Tamayo, comenzarán su cuenta regresiva para recibir la inyección letal.

En Houston (Texas) un grupo de familiares de los reos y activistas iniciarán el 31 de diciembre una vigilia en un carpa instalada en la plaza de Guadalupe, en la zona latina de la ciudad.

"A las seis de la tarde el sol comienza a esconderse y es como si con el sol del último año esta pesadilla se fuera, pero es una frustración no poder defender a nuestros hijos", dijo la mexicana Blanca Jiménez, fundadora de Familias Unidas.

Candidatos Debaten Como Gastar El Superavit Fiscal

Washington, - Convencidos de que Estados Unidos está instalado en una era de superávit fiscales, los principales aspirantes a la presidencia debaten ahora como hacer uso del sobrante de tres billones de dólares que estará disponible en la próxima década.

De cara a las primarias presidenciales, que comenzarán dentro de un mes, los candidatos prometen dedicar ese ahorro gubernamental a programas destinados a reducir los impuestos, la reforma de la seguridad social y el sistema de salud, entre otros asuntos.

El vicepresidente Albert Gore y el ex senador Bill Bradley, en el bando demócrata, y el gobernador de Texas, George Bush, y el senador John McCain, en las filas republicanas, vinculan sus candidaturas con "el uso responsable" de ese apreciado superávit.

En 1998, Estados Unidos alcanzó su primer superávit fiscal en tres décadas y ahora ningún político que quiera salvar su pellejo en una elección puede hablar de la posibilidad de volver a la época de los "déficit presupuestarios".

La Casa Blanca, que calcula que el sobrante fiscal puede llegar a 5,94 billones de dólares en 15 años, intentó este año comenzar a utilizar el presupuesto en un proyecto del presidente Bill Clinton para salvar las finanzas del programa de seguridad social.

Pero su propuesta quedó atrapada en un nuevo debate con los republicanos del Congreso, que intentaron utilizar el superávit para aprobar una gigantesca reforma contributiva que devolviera a los

ciudadanos hasta 800.000 millones de dólares en un plazo de 10 años.

La idea que favorecen los republicanos en general es utilizar la mayoría del billón de superávit no relacionado con el programa de seguridad social para bajar los impuestos que pagan los estadounidenses.

El resto del superávit proyectado para la próxima década -dos billones de dólares- es producto del propio programa de seguridad social y debe ser utilizado para reestructurarlo con la creación de cuentas privadas de retiro, coinciden Bush y McCain.

McCain utilizaría el 62 por ciento del billón de dólares no generado por el programa de seguridad social para revitalizar ese sistema de pensiones y limitaría los recortes tributarios a 230.000 millones de dólares durante la próxima década.

Si McCain fuese presidente, la financiación del programa Medicare (para ciudadanos de la tercera edad) recibiría 100.000 millones de dólares y 50.000 millones los destinaría a pagar la deuda nacional, que ronda los 3,5 billones de dólares.

La mayor diferencia de Bush con McCain es un mayor énfasis en la reducción de impuestos, pues el plan del Gobernador de Texas supone devolver a los contribuyentes 483.000 millones de dólares en los próximos diez años.

El vicepresidente Gore quiere utilizar los dos billones de dólares de superávit de la seguridad social para pagar más de la mitad de la deuda nacional, una idea propuesta desde principios de año por el presidente de la Reserva

Federal, Allan Greenspan.

El resto propone destinarlo a financiar Medicare (374.000 millones de dólares), reformar el sistema de salud (146.000 millones de dólares), reforzar programas militares (127.000 millones de dólares) y otros programas gubernamentales.

El ex senador Bradley considera que los dos billones del sobrante de la seguridad social debe utilizarse únicamente para revitalizar ese sistema de pensiones del Gobierno.

Su programa más suntuoso, a un coste de 65.000 millones de dólares, es su meta de dar un mayor acceso a planes médicos de

salud, un tema que ya le ha provocado fuertes debates con el vicepresidente Gore.

El secretario del Tesoro de EEUU, Larry Summers, ha advertido que una amplia reducción en los impuestos puede tragarse el superávit fiscal y tiene el potencial de crear una recesión económica en los próximos años.

Mientras, los republicanos, como el líder de la mayoría republicana del Senado, Trent Lott, creen que lo más justo es "devolver a la gente" el sobrante presupuestario, antes de que los burócratas del Gobierno "se lo gasten".

Pese A Protestas, Texas Comienza El 2000 Con Nuevas Ejecuciones

Por Judith Torrea

Austin, - Texas, el estado que ha aplicado la pena de muerte con mayor frecuencia en el país desde su reinstauración en 1976, comenzará el 2000 con nuevas ejecuciones, pese a las protestas de organizaciones de derechos humanos y de grupos minoritarios.

Para enero, Texas planea ejecutar a nueve reos entre los que se encuentran algunos que fueron condenados cuando eran menores de edad.

De un total de 70 condenados a la pena capital cuando eran menores, 37 están en el corredor de la muerte de Texas y 28 esperan la ejecución en Florida. El 75 por ciento de esos condenados son afroamericanos, el grupo minoritario más afectado por la aplicación de la pena de muerte.

Los menores no reciben

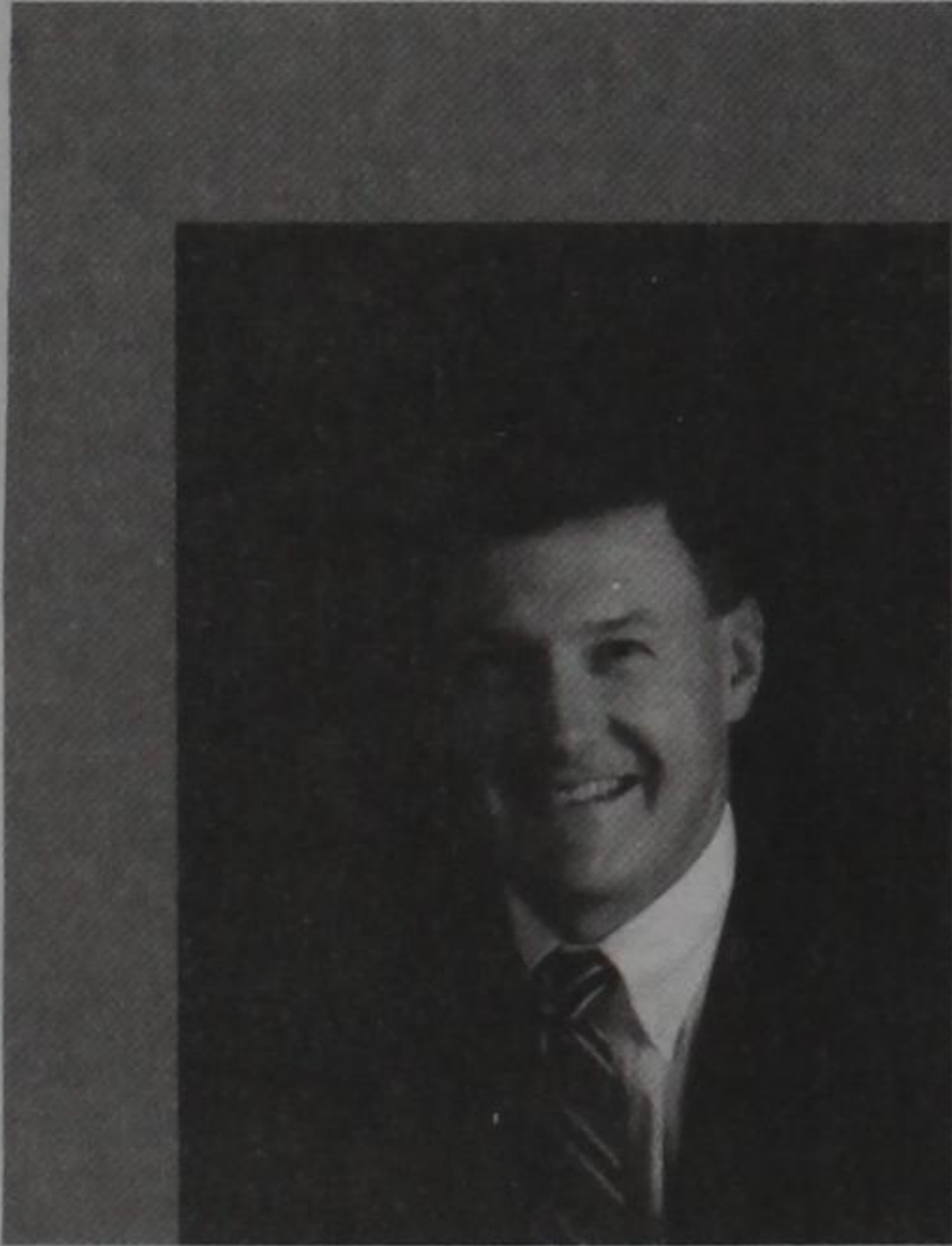
ningún tipo de tratamiento o programa especial, afirman los opositores a este tipo de castigo.

A pesar de todo, en Texas existe un movimiento a favor de que se reduzca la edad para que una persona sea condenada a muerte. En la pasada sesión de la legislatura texana, hubo intentos infructuosos para permitir que a partir de los 11 años se aplique la pena capital.

Anteriormente, el comisionado de Tierras del estado de Texas Tony Garza propuso rebajar, de 17 años de edad a los 13 años, la condena a la pena de muerte.

En 15 estados del país la edad mínima para ser condenado a la pena de muerte es de 18 años. En cuatro, es 17 años y en veinte estados se puede ir al corredor de la muerte a los 16 años.

A esta práctica de condenar a



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Sr. Pastor of Dauphin Way Baptist Church
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From Page 2

Debido al incidente de bombardeo de Vieques, las llamas de la independencia están siendo abanicadas en Puerto Rico. ¿Podría esto ser el presagio de las cosas venideras? ¿Por qué? Muchas posesiones de ultramar ya no sirven un propósito útil. Originalmente, eran vitales como estaciones carboneras para las escuadras impulsadas por calderas de vapor, la señal principal de poder y situación entre las naciones que surgían. Ahora, para todas las intenciones y todos los propósitos, las estaciones carboneras son anticuadas. Las marinas de guerra recorren ahora el mundo sin el impedimento de la necesidad de tener que detenerse para abastecerse de combustible.

Ceder el canal a Panamá es sencillamente un reconocimiento del hecho de que, a pesar de la mentalidad fosilizada, el mundo ha cambiado. La necesidad del colonialismo junto con la diplomática de las cañoneras ha pasado.

Ese es el mensaje que Clinton debería haber enviado a nuestros amigos y vecinos de la América Latina a medida que nos aproximábamos al final del año 1999.

(Raymond Rodríguez, de Long Beach, California, es catedrático universitario jubilado. El redacta una columna semanal para el Long Beach Press-Telegram.)

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