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VOICES *of Mexico*

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Vicente Fox's Long Search For Agreements

Articles by Leonardo Curzio,
José Antonio Crespo,
Rosío Vargas And
Víctor Rodríguez

Perspectives For Mexico-U.S. Bilateral Relations

Andrés Rozental

Mexican Migrants And the Fox Agenda

Mónica Vereá

Latin@ Testimonies About 9/11

Claire Joysmith

Stories of the Street The Art of Alex Rubio And Vincent Valdez

Kathy Vargas



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El misterio de la máscara de serpiente

Viateur Lefrançois

Una coedición de Artes de México y el Gobierno de Quebec

**Dos niños acróbatas, una aventura
en la zona maya y muchos
enigmas por
descifrar...**



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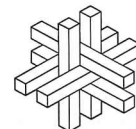
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Mario Ruiz Rocha

Cover

Vicent Valdez, *A Dance with Death*, 32 x 18 in., 2000 (oil on canvas). Collection of Joe Diaz.

Back Cover

Alex Rubio, *Virgen de Guadalupe*, 8 x 6 ft., (oil on canvas).

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OUR VOICE

In the last three years, relations between Mexico and the United States have been rocky, full of missteps and unfulfilled goals. Even though both countries' strategic affairs are considered shared problems, no agreements have been reached about solutions: while for one of the actors some measures are urgent and necessary, the other thinks they are secondary and can be put off. This is the negation not only these measures but also of the main strategic priorities that two neighbors should maintain on their agendas.

It should be mentioned that the strategic proposal about relations with the United States initially made by President Vicente Fox's administration was very important. It planned a substantial political approximation of a dimension that —conditions permitting— could have fostered a historic change in bilateral relations and in the way that the United States was perceived in Mexico in order to then deal with substantial points of the agenda like migration and closer trade ties through the possible reformulation of some of NAFTA's central issues. At the same time, from the time he took office, President George W. Bush's government proposed to strengthen the relationship and even showed signs that it considered that conditions existed for building a special relationship. Both a new government in Mexico with fresh ideas about foreign policy and the initiation of a U.S. administration optimistic about bilateral relations made possible an initial climate of understanding and harmony that led to growing expectations about the future.

Although the September 11 terrorist attacks were not the direct nor the main cause of the interruption of what looked like a special relationship, nor that the negotiations about some of the particular issues on the agenda like migration significantly diminished in intensity, it can be argued that they critically exposed the general climate of bilateral relations to important risks. In any case, there was very little time to find out how relations could have developed in the new historic moment. On the one hand, partly because of its surprise at the events themselves, but mainly because of a lack of sensitivity in reacting as a good neighbor to the tragedy, Mexico's government lost the qualitative and quantitative ground it had gained in the previous months. On the other hand, Washington understandably reacted vigorously to the tragedy vis-à-vis the outside world although, in the case of Mexico, with inexplicable superficiality given the fact that in any reasonable bilateral relationship the high-level issues remain on the agenda regardless of the circumstances if we attend to the professionalism they demand. Washington did not do that and Mexico did not know how to respond in time to that new situation; as a result, Mexico could not negotiate a middle ground as opposed to the all-or-nothing policy the United States rigidly put forward. Inevitably, relations were limited to support or non-support for the United States.

It would seem that now there is a possible space opening up for reconciliation. The recent telephone conversation between the two presidents and their agreement to have new talks during their trip to Asia may make for new possibilities in bilateral relations that we should pay attention to. However, two things could negatively affect the future possibilities of this new situation. On the one hand, the election of Arnold Schwarzenegger as governor of California has already had an effect on the debate about migration, tremendously tensing the local political climate with effects on the bilateral negotiations in the matter. It will undoubtedly also have an effect on relations between the two presidents and their negotiating teams. If we add to this that it is very probable that President Bush seeks to make up for lost time with Mexico and come to at least a minimal migratory accord —for purely electoral reasons and eventually to thank Mexico's vote in the Security Council in favor of UN Security Council Resolution 1511 on Iraq's future which was adopted unanimously by the 15-member council— we can say that the possibility of coming to agreements is substantially limited and demands that the Mexican government display political creativity that it has not shown up until now, which puts at risk the aim of achieving fundamental advances on the bilateral agenda during this presidential term. This scenario could even make for a historic reversal in relations with the United States that could be difficult to revert in the short future.

* * *

In effect, since September 11, Mexico-U.S. relations stopped being a priority for our neighbors; they have concentrated all their energy on the international scene on the war against terrorism and the occupation of Iraq. As we have already mentioned, matters like the negotiation of a migratory agreement or the trade and economic integration of the Americas have taken a back seat. However, not everything is negative in the prospects for bilateral relations, as veteran Mexican diplomat, Ambassador Andrés Rozental points out in a lecture on this topic that we publish in this issue's "Mexico-U.S. Relations" section. For Rozental, it is no longer viable to negotiate "the full enchilada" in migratory matters, as was the intention before 9/11, but it is possible and a good idea for both nations to come to agreements that benefit both, such as regularizing the migratory status of hundreds of thousands of our compatriots living illegally in the United States today, in exchange for Mexico's cooperation in the efforts to build a secure border. In this same section, we publish a preview of Mexican political scientist José Antonio Aguilar Rivera's research on consciousness and attitudes about diversity in the United States and Mexico. In the country that fostered the "melting pot" Rivera points to a general tendency to build particular ethnic identities and to not mix the races. In the case of Mexico, the famous "cosmic race" or the exaltation of mestization as an ideology and a search for a homogeneous national identity hides a culture of discrimination against and isolation of indigenous ethnic groups.

In "United States Affairs", Mónica Vereá contributes an article exploring temporary Mexican agricultural workers programs in the United States. Her analysis puts the issue of migration in the context of the broad spectrum of U.S. national security, the only way today to negotiate migratory agreements in both nations' interests. Celina Bárcenas, for her part, explains the growing importance to Mexico's economy of Mexicans' remittances sent from the United States; they have become the country's main source of hard currency, surpassing oil and tourism, totalling more than U.S.\$10 billion a year, which unfortunately, is almost completely absorbed by household expenses and not in productive investment for development. The section concludes with an article by Sergio Casanueva and Stephen E. Wetlesen about the use and abuse of the term "Hispanic," and its ideological and political implications for the Latino-origin population in the United States. In "Canadian Issues" we also present a contribution about Mexican migration. In this case, Rosa María Vanegas' article centers on seasonal agricultural workers hired in Canada who, contrary to what many think, suffer from exploitative working conditions and mistreatment, while the Mexican government does nothing to alleviate them.

Three years into and halfway through the presidential term, the Fox administration cannot be said to have many achievements to its credit. In part because of the fact that the party in office is a minority in both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate and in part because of the president's and the cabinet's inability to come to agreements with other political actors, the self-styled "government of change" has not been capable of implementing the transformations the country requires. The disenchantment of the citizenry has been such that it is undoubtedly part of the explanation behind the electoral debacle of the National Action Party (PAN) in the mid-term elections, in which the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) made a comeback, showing unexpected signs of vitality even though it had been deposed after 70 years in office.

The structural reforms promised from the beginning of the administration (in energy, the country's tax and financial systems, politics and elections, labor matters and telecommunications) have not gotten through Congress. In our "Politics" section we present two articles that reflect on the first three years of Fox's presidency, written by well known Mexican political analysts. Leonardo Curzio looks at some paradoxes of the Fox administration, such as the fact that at the same time that he is very popular, the president has not managed to avert the revenge votes against the party that ushered him into office. In his article, José Antonio Crespo offers a panorama of probable scenarios for the political agreements needed to push through the reforms, none of which is very encouraging. It will be very interesting, he comments, to see what the PRI position is now that it once again has a chance of recovering the presidency in 2006. The section closes with a contribution from Rosío Vargas and Víctor Rodríguez about the consequences and arguments behind the energy reform, promoted by the government even using strategies that do not stop at the state itself violating the rule of law.

It is true that the Fox administration has faced difficult moments. The recession in the United States and September 11 have undoubtedly been contributing factors to its bad performance and lack of tangible

results benefitting the public, but we cannot overlook that internal factors also exist, such as the ineffectiveness and lack of political coordination and even sometimes of social sensitivity of a cabinet more interested in reaching its macro-economic goals than dealing with the population's needs. One of the most obvious and painful expressions of this, historic levels of unemployment, is analyzed by economist Enrique Pino in his contribution to the "Economy" section. Here, we also publish an article by specialist María Cristina Rosas about the WTO Ministerial Meeting in Cancún and the fate of the Doha international trade accords, at risk after the tremendous failure of the negotiations.

In "Society", Rubén García Clarck presents an analysis of the results of the Ministry of the Interior's most recent survey on political culture. He easily finds reasons to be on the alert around issues like the public's perception of Mexico's nascent democracy, its extremely low level of trust in almost all political actors and its scant interest in politics and civic participation in general, none of which is good news for the consolidation of democracy in Mexico. The same section also includes an article by Simone Lucatello about the extremely delicate matter of production, trafficking and consumption of drugs along Mexico's northern border, as well as the problems they bring with them such as the exponential increase in violence and the deterioration of social and community life that have unfortunately placed some of our border cities among those with the world's highest crime rates.

* * *

Mexican-American identity is not a fixed set of attitudes, beliefs, opinions and forms of behavior. Neither is it a uniform political or aesthetic position. It is, rather, a diffuse imaginary in which an enormous diversity of world views and artistic and literary forms of expression all fit. In our "Art and Culture" section, we present two manifestations of this quest for an identity that goes beyond the mere "ethnic" or "nationalist" discourse and attempts, from a specific belonging, to reflect and make proposals in the vast world of universal values. Art critic Kathy Vargas writes about "street" painting, materialized in murals and graffiti, by two very original "Chicano street children": painters Vincent Valdez and Alex Rubio, who deal not only with the marginalization and exclusion of the Mexican population in the United States, but also with the reality of alienation, disenchantment and the dearth of opportunities for U.S. youth in general. Cultural journalist Retha Oliver presents us the trajectory of film-maker and videographer Willie Varela, widely recognized in the world of U.S. experimental cinema. The section concludes with a review of the very special sculpture and painting of Noel López, another of the huge number of visual artists from the state of Oaxaca. In our "Literature" section, we continue with the series of examples of work by Mexican-American writers. In this issue, Bruce Novoa writes about the proposal of an original current of writers who use the detective novel as a vehicle to describe today's Mexican-American communities, among them, Manuel Ramos, one of whose short stories we also publish here.

Mexico City, the immense megalopolis growing willy-nilly, today home to almost 20 million people, is also the site of many special, interesting neighborhoods, *barrios* and *colonias*, sometimes veritable towns in their own right, with their own traditions in the midst of the city. This issue's "The Splendor of Mexico" section is dedicated to three Mexico City neighborhoods, outstanding not only for their architecture and particular fascinating histories, but also because of the influence they have had in the city's urban development and for being the site of events of historical importance for the country. Mauricio Magdaleno Chapa, Agustín Jiménez and Sury Attie write about Tlatelolco, Santa María de la Ribera and San Rafael, respectively.

Lastly, in "Museums," we offer an article about a place that combines science, art and history, the Museum of Light, managed under the aegis of the National University. Here, the visitor can learn everything about the physical phenomenon of light and in addition, admire murals from the first half of the twentieth century, preserved in a building of splendid design.

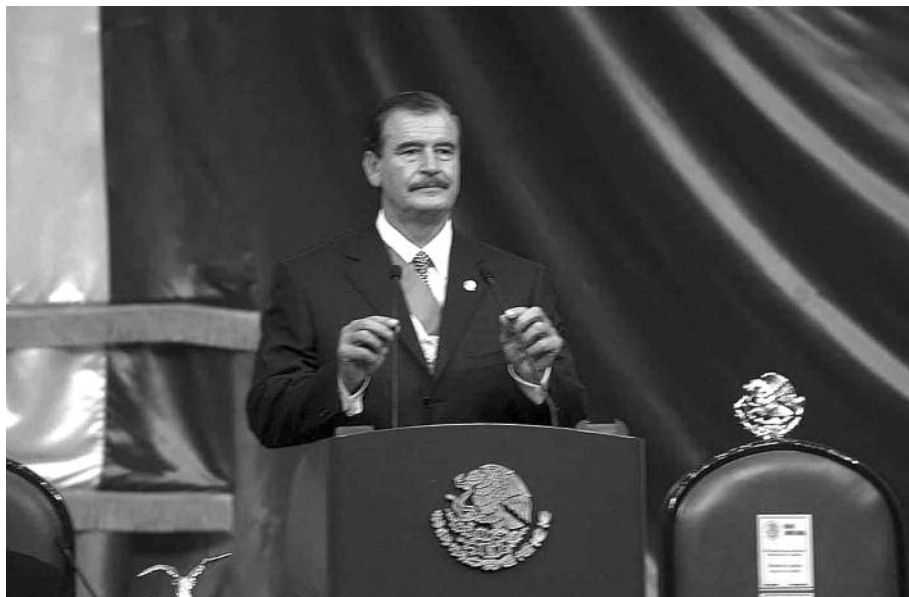
José Luis Valdés-Ugalde

Vicente Fox

Three Years of Administration

Three Paradoxes

Leonardo Curzio*



Juan Pablo Zamora / Cuartoscuro

In early 2003, the Mexican government's economic area published its macro-economic forecast for the year. Coincidentally, projected growth for the period was three percent of gross domestic product and estimated inflation was also three percent. So, 2003 began to be called "the year of the three." It was three years into the Fox administration, and three more years were left until the end of contemporary Mexico's first non-Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) administration.

* Researcher at CISAN.

Beyond numerical coincidences, President Fox arrived to mid-term immersed in three great paradoxes, each worth considering separately.

THE FIRST PARADOX

The first paradox is a popular president without the legislative backing needed to move forward his program. First off, it should be pointed out that despite enjoying a broad and comfortable approval rating among the public, Vicente Fox was not able to translate

that political capital into sufficient votes to give his party a majority that would allow him to govern unperturbed.

In May 2003, before the federal elections, the president had a 63.5 percent approval rating; based on this, balloting predictions were made that were not borne out by events. Some of his party's strategists thought that this high approval rating could mechanically be transformed into legislative support. Those who based their decisions on this supposition have met with a resounding failure. The electoral balance sheet for the National Action Party (PAN) is very negative.

The president's party had a first warning of what would happen July 6 during the local elections in the strategic State of Mexico, which has the largest voter registration rolls in the country. In that balloting, despite the president's visible support to his party's candidates, the PAN made no significant advance.

The federal mid-term elections and several local elections took place in July 2003. Things went well only in a few states. In Mexico City, for example, the PAN was swept aside by the

tion governors out of 32, the majority from the PRI.

With the new make-up of the Chamber of Deputies, in addition to his own party's votes, the president needs almost 100 deputies from other political parties to pass the federal budget and all ordinary bills. Constitutional changes are practically a dream, since he would need the support of more than 180 legislators from other parties to attempt them. Never has parliamentary arithmetic been so adverse for a chief executive.

Despite enjoying a broad and comfortable approval rating, Vicente Fox was not able to translate that political capital into sufficient votes to give his party a majority that would allow him to govern unperturbed.

Party of the Democratic Revolution, losing two of the wards it had won in 2000. It was also defeated by a broad margin in Nuevo León, a state reconquered by the PRI after six years of PAN government. In Sonora, Campeche and Colima, despite notably improving its showing, the PAN did not manage to defeat the PRI. Recovering San Luis Potosí from the PRI and maintaining Querétaro under its leadership are its main —though limited— successes.

But if in the local elections the results were not encouraging, the most severe blow came in the elections for federal deputies. The PAN's seats in the lower chamber plummeted from 206 to 151, a calamity whose political dimension has yet to be clearly weighed. The man who threw the PRI out of the presidency now has to govern by making pacts with a PRI opposition that controls the two chambers of Congress (the PAN has only 36 percent of the Senate), in addition to having 25 opposi-

tion governors out of 32, the majority from the PRI. With this balance of forces against him, Fox can see that his popularity is not as high as in the first half of the year, but neither has it dropped notably. After the federal elections and concretely in August 2003, different polls said the president continued to enjoy the support of almost 60 percent of the population.¹

THE SECOND PARADOX

The second contradiction is linked to the economy. A battery of figures exists that, looked at from any angle, is positive and should foster optimism. The peso-dollar exchange rate, for example, has been enviably stable over recent years. Interest rates hover at their lowest levels in recent decades, and the Mexican financial system has recovered after the severe crisis it suffered in the last decade.

It is a merit of the Fox government to have achieved an important differ-

ence in the country risk vis-à-vis other economies in the region, as well as having obtained investment grade from prestigious evaluating houses like Moody's, Fitch and Standard and Poor's. In addition, Mexico is in a privileged position, third after China and the United States, on the list made up by A.T. Kearney that classifies the destinations of preferred investment for large companies. We could continue citing positive results for an administration that has scrupulously tended macroeconomic indicators and stability, but has not managed to turn this into prosperity for the majority of the population.

A few years ago, the figures and data summarizing the stability of the economy's main indicators would have been the delight of the majority of investors. It is somewhat intriguing to see that in a country that went through two decades of economic turbulence the public sees these successes as just another piece of data. According to the survey we already quoted, almost two-thirds of the population (65.5 percent) does not view the economic situation with optimism, and only one-third thinks it is better or the same as in previous years.

This concern is reflected in all polls of the public. People's main concerns today are unemployment (27 percent) and the economic crisis (26 percent). We should underline that these two items rate much higher than traditional concerns such as insecurity, corruption and poverty.²

Recapitulating, Vicente Fox has not managed to transmit to the broad public nor to the business community a major truth, which is that the advantages the country has today are due fundamentally to the fact that his administration has not attempted —like former President Salinas did, for exam-

ple—to use economic policy for political-electoral ends. This great merit of Fox's has not been adequately communicated.

The lack of high growth rates and insufficient job creation have undermined the optimism of many sectors of society. The country is in a state of uncertainty about the future of its economy due to different external factors (like U.S. economic performance) and internal ones like the frustration created by the impossibility of advancing with structural reforms, a climate of helplessness fed by the president himself through his idealization of the reforms. Let us look at this issue more closely since it is at the center of the national situation.

Almost all actors influential in the economy agree on the diagnosis of the situation. The approval of structural reforms would make it possible for growth rates to increase. As a sample of this reasoning, let us look at what the Banco de México, Mexico's central bank, said in its last report:

Macroeconomic stability is a necessary precondition, but it is not sufficient to foster growth of production, income and employment. For that, measures that increase productivity and competitiveness of the Mexican economy are needed. The structural reforms, deregulation and, in general, measures that increase the flexibility and capability of responding to the changing conditions of the world economy must aim in this direction.³

The consensus is that the reforms cannot be postponed. What are these reforms? In his last report to the nation on September 1, the president reduced them to five: labor, fiscal, telecommu-



President Vicente Fox and congressional leaders arriving for his third report to the nation.

nications and energy reforms and an overall reform of the state. Their passage, as we have already seen by looking at the composition of Congress, depends to a great extent on the PRI's willingness to cooperate in the legislature. The PRI holds the key to the reforms and, therefore, their success depends on complicated political negotiations, and the very logic of give-and-take and mutual concessions could take the teeth out of them. For many national political observers, the question is no longer only whether there will be reforms or not, but how profound they will be: no minor matter.

Fox's problem is that despite all his success in the macro-economy, the reforms have become a totem. The president himself has contributed to establishing a perception among the public that, with the passage of time, has become a real obstacle to the appreciation of his achievements: the idea that without structural reforms economic growth will not happen is a linear interpretation of economic reality, since there is a broad margin of options in the domestic market and in

the diversification of markets that has still not been explored.

But, let us return to the legislative-political processing of the reforms. Let us suppose that without structural reforms we are condemned to prostration. Politically, using this discourse has been very troublesome since the electorate not only did not react positively, but quite to the contrary, decided to vote in a Congress whose composition in fact made it even more difficult to form a majority that would guarantee the possibility of changes to the Constitution.

At this point, it is not a matter of underestimating the importance of congressional agreements now that with the beginning of the new session everything points to the party leaders coming up with an agreement on a fiscal reform, but it is worthwhile placing expectations about a tax reform in their proper perspective.

An exercise in realism is needed to make it clear to the public (and particularly those who make up the army of the unemployed, which the most recent National Statistics Institute sur-

vey put at 3.5 percent of the work force) just what can be expected from the coming reforms. This is to avoid broad sectors of society continuing to harbor the hope—a rather mechanical hope—that the country’s problems will begin to be solved once the reforms are passed by the legislature.

The fiscal reform, for example, is necessary. What is more, it is absolutely indispensable. But by no means is it the panacea for solving all the country’s woes. We do not intend to minimize its effects, but it is clear that the re-

expenditures to eight percent of GDP by 2006, the reform will give the administration an amount of money that, while not to be dismissed, does not add up to enough to deal with the country’s problems and qualitatively change the economic situation.

THE THIRD PARADOX

President Fox’s third great contradiction is that his administration’s successes in the political arena and in the

control of the country in a scenario in which presidential power is decreasing. With all its problems, the system of checks and balances is functioning; the relationship with the state and municipal governments, with slight friction, has been relatively smooth. The country is experiencing a democratic life and regimen of freedoms as though that had always been the norm. As with the economy, in matters of institutionalization, the president’s discourse puts more emphasis on the agreements to come than in the equilibria that exist today.

Other matters of great importance such as the passage of the Law of Transparency and the beginning of activities of the Federal Institute of Access to Information (IFAI), as well as the coming into effect of the Law of Public Functioning, have not been sufficient to sow the idea among the public that the country has changed. In August 2003, half those surveyed by Consulta Mitovsky pollsters stated that in Mexico there had only been a change of the people in power and not a change in the system. Only 44 percent thought the opposite. This is Fox’s last paradox: the country has changed but it does not seem to have changed. **MM**

It is a merit of the Fox government to have achieved an important difference in the country risk vis-à-vis other economies in the region, as well as having obtained investment grade from prestigious evaluating houses.

form that is politically possible, even in the best of cases, is no more than a prologue of a book still to be written. It is not a matter of criticizing the cake before baking it, but we do have to know how large it is to be before ringing church bells in celebration. Let us review. When it proposed its first fiscal reform in 2001, the Fox administration calculated that it would increase tax revenues by two percent of the gross domestic product, or about U.S.\$12 billion. Even applying VAT to food and drugs, revenues would increase to 13 or 14 percent of GDP, which continues to be a very low rate compared with other economies in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

In addition, that fiscal reform—if it happens—has a series of prior commitments: with rebates to lower income families, federal items and legislative commitments to increase educational

normalization of democracy do not seem to enthuse even him. Substantial advances in different aspects of governmental performance have been overshadowed by the tendency to put the accent on the road that remains to be traveled and not on what has already been covered.

It is not the aim of this article to review advances in education like the number of what have been called “quality schools” or the number of scholarships given out in the three years of this administration. Neither is it its aim to look at the successful housing program that has benefitted thousands of families.

The Fox administration has had palpable successes in other areas, like the fight against drug trafficking and kidnapping, some recognized by the Bush government, so sparing in its praise.

The administration’s most important success is having maintained political

NOTES

¹ In this case, we used the 11th evaluation of the administration, the National Household Survey done by Consulta Mitovsky. See www.consulta.com.mx

² In some surveys, like Indemerc-Harris’s September 2003 poll, unemployment is the main concern of 32 percent of those interviewed. See www.indemerc-harris.com

³ Banco de México, “Informe sobre la inflación abril-junio 2003” (Mexico City: Banco de México, July 2003), p. 52.

Legislative Agreements Vicente Fox's Dream

José Antonio Crespo*



Nelly Salas / Cuartoscuro

The PAN caucus in the Chamber of Deputies.

In his third report to the nation, Vicente Fox highlighted how important it is for political parties with seats in Congress to come to agreements on some of the reforms necessary for the country's development, such as the energy, fiscal and labor reforms and the broad and vague "political reform of the state." First, the president emphasized the pluralism of the new Chamber of Deputies, the Fifty-Ninth Congress, as a reflection of the July 6, 2003 popular mandate at the polls: "In the recent elections, the public voted in a plural Chamber of Deputies, not giving any of the political forces represented here the majority." In effect, the electorate again denied the

absolute majority to all parties, just as it has since 1997—at least according to official figures—which means the government does not have a majority. What is more, the voters decided to deprive the governing National Action Party (PAN) of a large part of their support and strengthen the position of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). While from 2000 to 2003, the PRI and the PAN had the same percentage of federal deputies (about 42 percent, although the PAN had a few decimal points less, representing three of the lower chamber's 500 seats), since July's mid-term elections, the PAN will only have about 30 percent (151 seats), compared to the PRI's 44 percent (222). The PRI will have 14 percent more deputies than the second largest electoral force, the administration's party,

with a difference between them of a little over 70 deputies. If the executive had difficulties in pushing forward its initiatives during the first half of the presidential term, with the new makeup of the lower chamber, prospects are much more discouraging. This does not mean that agreements cannot be reached, but the PRI will have to be willing. This is why in his report to the nation, the president called on the congressional caucuses to agree to foster structural reforms: "It will be the responsibility of all [the political forces] to come to agreements to articulate this political diversity." Fox tried to underscore this message even more by including it in the traditional "Cry for Independence" ceremony that commemorates the 1810 uprising every September 15, when he shouted, "Long

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live [legislative] agreements for a better Mexico.”

In effect, we are faced with a new divided government, but one in which the governing party is a minority—and for this reason the concept of a minority government is applicable—even a smaller minority than during the first half of the term. Under a presidentialist regime, several alternatives exist between the extremes of the spectrum of the distribution of power: a) a unified government; b) a government with a plurality in Congress; c) a minority government; and d) a divided government.

- a) A unified government is one in which the president’s party has an absolute majority in Congress, though not a two-thirds majority, therefore making it impossible for it to change the Constitution alone, which would be more characteristic of a hegemonic government (which corresponds more to authoritarianism than democracy);
- b) A government with a plurality in Congress, where the governing party does not have an absolute majority;
- c) A “minority government” is one in which the president’s party is a minority in Congress, second, or even third in size; and
- d) A “divided government,” a generic term used to describe all governments that are not unified (that is, all those in which the governing

party does not have an absolute majority in Congress). It is, more precisely, a government in which one opposition party has an absolute majority in Congress and can therefore pass normal legislation by itself. As we go from the first type of government to the other, we get closer to the anarchistic pole of the spectrum of distribution of power (see graph).

Our starting point is that the different kinds of non-unified governments are closer to the pole of dispersed power because the formation of majorities to approve governmental proposals is more complicated, and periods of paralysis or being bogged down are more probable, at least with regard to some essential points on the government’s agenda. Naturally, in countries like Mexico that have two-chamber congresses, more combinations are possible: a unified government in the lower chamber but without a majority in the upper chamber; or a government with a plurality in the upper chamber and minority in the lower chamber; or even a divided government in which the lower chamber is controlled by one opposition party and the upper chamber by a different one, etc. In 2000, the PRI had a clear plurality in the Senate (60 seats out of 128), while the PAN had 48 senators. Thus, together with the five senators of the Green Ecologist Party of Mexico (PVEM),

the PRI’s new ally, the latter was able to get an absolute majority (65 out of 128). And even though in the lower chamber the PRI and its ally, the PVEM, do not make up an absolute majority (they have 48.2 percent of the seats), it would not be difficult for it to bring in the two small parties, the Labor Party (PT) and Convergence for Democracy, which together could give the absolute majority to the PRI-PVEM alliance.

In fact, this possibility was proven not long ago in the case of the proposal to strip PRI Senator Ricardo Aldana, the treasurer of the powerful and corrupt Oil Workers Union, accused of siphoning off U.S.\$150 million from oil giant Pemex to his party’s presidential campaign in 2000, of his congressional immunity. The president of the lower chamber, PAN Deputy Juan de Dios Castro, called for a *juicio de procedencia* (a trial that cancels immunity)¹ whereby the plenary of the Chamber of Deputies would vote on whether Senator Aldana would be deprived of his congressional immunity. However, before the time limit for holding that trial was up, the PRI asked for a vote in the plenary on whether the call for the trial was valid. The majority of the Labor Party and Convergence for Democracy legislators backed up the PRI and the PVEM, giving them more votes than the PAN and the leftist Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), thus scrapping the trial. This incident gives

TYPES OF GOVERNMENT AND DISTRIBUTION OF POWER		
Unified government Hegemonic government Concentration of power	Government with a plurality	Minority government Divided government Dispersion of power

an idea of the PRI's capacity for forming an absolute majority that can confront and eventually defeat the other two most important parties, the PAN and the PRD. This, together with the majority that the PRI-PVEM alliance already has in the Senate, must lead us to the conclusion that we are, in effect, faced with a minority government, a situation that does not bode well for the approval of the government's agenda.

This does not necessarily mean that paralysis will prevail; that will depend on the political-electoral strategy the PRI decides to implement. Paralysis may be the result if the PRI decides to boy-

office is returning to power...It is society that has to more capably foster and guide the changes, but they must be spearheaded by the government, and this government is tied up or proposes a change to what we had before, a retrograde evolution...We want to say to Mexico that we are the change.³

This doctrine of boycott was basically applied during the first half of the term, when the PRI did not support the PAN's change of the president's indigenous bill that would have achieved a peace pact with the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN). The PRI also washed its hands of the fiscal

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cott the executive's initiatives to discredit it before the public and thus open up the possibility of regaining office. This strategy arises out of a premise expressed by PRI Senator Manuel Bartlett, who a few days after Fox took office as president said,

Mexico could have a better time of it if Fox has a bad time....Mr. Fox is our product: he grew because we let him grow....We have to clearly define our profile as a people's party and fight Fox's right-wing regime every day.²

A corollary of this position was stated by another influential PRI senator, Fidel Herrera:

The president won the election and he must assume the responsibilities. We believe that the logic of alternating in

reform the administration proposed in mid-2001, a highly modified version of which was passed with PAN and PRD votes alone. The reform failed because it was not able to boost revenues as needed; in addition, many of its features were eliminated because they were dysfunctional. Thus, the PRI was able to put stumbling blocks in the way of this reform and at the same time avoid its costs. And until now, the PRI has held back the energy reform, even changing its party statutes during its November 2001 eighteenth national assembly, forbidding PRI legislators to vote for a change in constitutional articles regulating the state ownership of Mexico's energy and sub-soil.

The PAN, for its part, wanted to place responsibility for following this boycott strategy on the PRI, and during the mid-term elections for the Chamber

of Deputies called on the public to give it a majority, using the slogan, "Take the brake off change." This was an indirect allusion to the PRI (and partially to the PRD). The election results demonstrate the campaign's failure and the relative success of the PRI boycott strategy. However, that does not mean that the PRI will decide to continue with this tactic. It could try to push for some structural reforms in the second half of the Fox term, not exactly because of civic responsibility to the country, but because its new position of relative strength and the real possibility it has of returning to office could be the incentive for doing so.

The new coordinator of the PRI caucus, Elba Esther Gordillo (who, together with Roberto Madrazo, was on the winning ticket for the PRI's national leadership in February 2002), said, "I agree with promoting and supporting the changes that will benefit the nation, whether it be with the PAN, the PRD or any other party."⁴ The possible reasons for this are: a) At this point, it is in the PRI's interest to demonstrate to the public that it is a responsible party, capable of pushing for and backing the reforms the country requires to advance in its economic and social development; b) Faced with the possibility of regaining the presidency, it would be more rational to have a more appropriate economic and institutional basis for governing the country, for example, through an effective fiscal reform that would give the government more revenue to deal with growing social spending; c) The PRI would try to capitalize on the reforms, even if they were the result of several political parties' efforts, given that it is the driving force in Congress.

Of course, the reforms would essentially be those contained in the PRI's

legislative platform, just as Roberto Madrazo has said:

We are not talking about the same reforms as those presented today, because some of them seem incomplete to us, others inopportune, others lacking in content beneficial to the country and the people. In my view, the reforms are going to benefit the next administration. I think that these three years that the government has wasted in not making the reforms are practically going to make it impossible for the reforms to favor the current administration. We are talking about reforms that are going to be of service to the next administration.⁵

This kind of thinking is part of a positive logic that encourages the three large parties to make pacts to pass re-

forms that will favor the next president. Why? Because all three think that any of them may be the winner in 2006 and may benefit from the reforms once in office. Thus, it is not totally out of the question that some of the structural reforms may be approved in the second half of the presidential term. What is not yet known is how profound they will be. In addition, there is a time limit. Many politicians and observers have said that whatever the reforms are, they will have to be approved relatively soon because the electoral dynamic—which in Mexico is very active and omnipresent—could polarize the parties. There will be 10 elections for governor in 2004. In 2005, the parties will begin their internal processes for nominating their presidential candidates, and 2006 is a presidential elec-

tion year, which will monopolize all the parties' attention. Thus, of the three years left in Vicente Fox's term, the useful time for legislation will really be much shorter. The panorama for concretizing the structural reforms (or some of them), although not dramatically bleak, is not very encouraging either. **MM**

NOTES

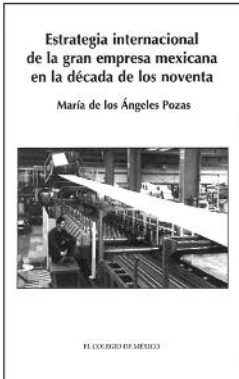
¹ The *juicio de procedencia* is a procedure established by Mexican law to determine whether a political trial against a public servant with immunity, like senators, is in order. [Editor's Note.]

² "Bucareli Ocho", political magazine *El Universal* (Mexico City) 12 November 2000.

³ *Ibid.*, 20 May 2002.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 25 May 2003.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 8 July 2003.



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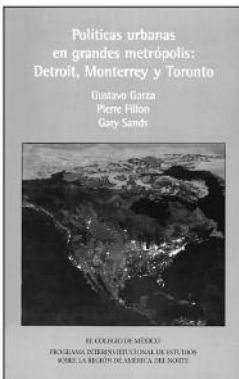
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The Energy Reform A Long-Term Strategy

Rosío Vargas*
Víctor Rodríguez-Padilla**



German Hernández / Cuartoscuro

Members of the Mexican Electrical Workers Union (SME) march against privatization.

The energy reform, a cardinal element in the Fox project, has been seriously questioned by those

who think that its paralysis is one of the failures of the executive's political-economic project, a reflection of its inability to negotiate and come to consensus with the country's different political forces, but mainly with Congress. Critics argue that not only the

viability of the energy utilities but the economic future of the country itself depend on its being passed. To overcome the impasse, during his third report to the nation, President Fox announced some important changes in his cabinet that indicate his turning away

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from his initial use of head hunters and their entrepreneurial slant in hiring and clearly returning to the old style of recruitment. Once again, politics has become the central axis that will make it possible for the administration's proposal to meet with success.

Among the changes involving the energy sector is the replacement of engineer Ernesto Martens as minister of energy by Felipe Calderón Hinojosa.¹ Officially, the operator of the Fox project is Minister of the Interior Santiago Creel Miranda, charged with

The so-called energy reform is supposed to be integral,
including both electricity and oil, but legal changes
are only immediately viable for the electricity sector.

The idea now is to effect a gradual reform.

the task of coming to the necessary agreements to make it a reality. He is supported by Minister of Finance Francisco Gil; the new head of the Ministry of Energy, Felipe Calderón Hinojosa; the director of the state-owned oil giant, Pemex, Raúl Muños Leos; the director of the Federal Electricity Commission (CFE), Alfredo Elías Ayub; and the director of the Central Mexico Light and Energy Company (CLYFC), Luis de Pablo.

In Congress, paradoxically, Elba Esther Gordillo, former teachers' union leader and majority leader of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) caucus, heads up the efforts for the chief executive's energy project. A first response from Congress to the presidential initiative has been the different parties and their caucuses' willingness to start negotiations to come to a definitive resolution of the reforms.

In one sense or another, everyone seems to agree that some solution has to be found. The debate turns on what orientation that solution should have and this touches on a central point about the nature of the state. Thus, while for the executive and the National Action Party (PAN) the state should play a subsidiary role to supplement and complement the market, the PRI in contrast—particularly its more nationalistic factions—defends the state playing a major economic role and leading national economic development based on constitutional mandate (Articles 25,

27 and 28). While in the first case, the exaltation of the role of the market averts any discussion about equality, underlying the second case are the jurisdiction and performance of the state as a tool in the quest for social justice. The latter is usually overlooked or minimized in discussions about the direction the energy sector should take. That is to say, the arguments center on the problems of companies' competitiveness, efficiency and financial solvency, but rarely get to the heart of the matter by also dealing with it as a problem of equality and the distribution of wealth.

The so-called energy reform is supposed to be integral, including both electricity and oil, but legal changes are only immediately viable for the electricity sector. In order to not create false expectations like those that emerged at the beginning of the Fox

administration, the idea now is to effect a gradual reform implemented as the different measures become politically viable. It would begin by creating legal certainty for already existing foreign investment in different forms of electricity generation by independent producers, recognizing them in the Constitution. It should be remembered here that the liberalization of surplus electricity decreed by Vicente Fox in May 2001 was finally overturned by the Supreme Court in April 2002. Shortly after taking office, the current administration proposed the creation of an electricity market initially for large consumers but that could be extended to all clients in the medium term. The first step was the amendment of the Regulatory Law for Public Service of Electrical Energy in May 2001 to liberalize production and sale of surplus supply. Since this amendment was rejected by the Supreme Court in April 2002, the executive sent Congress a bill proposing constitutional and legislative changes to achieve its initial aim. In the long run (10 to 15 years), the strategy would consist of the gradual establishment of a totally deregulated electricity market.

Changes are also brewing in the oil industry since Pemex has continued to open bidding on multiple service contracts² offering private capital the opportunity to invest in natural gas exploration and development, although natural gas is not part of the first stage of the Fox strategy. Despite the fact that the legality of multiple service contracts is being questioned and that officials admit that incorporating the private sector into natural gas production is complex, in fact, Pemex is acting with the legal certainty it has by virtue of not being part of the execu-

tive. The company considers that its actions do not come under the same jurisdiction as a strategic public company and that therefore it can continue to hold bidding for multiple service contracts using its own criteria. Its legal strategy, in contrast to the electricity sector, is not to propose changes to legislation, since Pemex considers the changes it is promoting to already be legal. It is betting, rather, on the technical difficulties that the legislature has in going to the Supreme Court, the body which can put a stop to permits in the case of controversies with Congress over the multiple service contracts. Meanwhile, oil and gas companies are already investing in Pemex in the hopes of achieving legal access to exploration and drilling of deposits first of natural gas and, with time, of crude oil.

THE TECHNICAL ARGUMENTS

The administration's strategy combines the entry, consolidation and expansion of the private sector and the gradual weakening of the historic electricity operators, the Federal Electricity Commission (CFE) and the Central Mexico Light and Energy Company (CLYFC). This strategy consists of granting the private sector the right to the construction and operation of all new installations planned for public service, thus aiming to de facto privatize electricity generation and then change the Constitution to create guarantees for private investment. In the second place, the strategy has been to consciously contract excessive debt for the CFE through *Pidiregas* (Deferred Impact Projects in Spending), a contingency debt that is not as lethal as direct in-

debtedness, but is manipulated in the media to discredit the public institution's financial solvency and ability to respond to growing demand.³ In the third place, investment in electricity generation and maintenance has been reduced, causing black-outs, bad service and economic losses, in order to discredit state management of the public utility. In general, the government aim is to create an atmosphere of crisis and uncertainty about electricity investment and supply by manipulating public opinion to minimize the fact that it is de-capitalizing the companies using dif-

Oil and gas companies are already investing in Pemex
in the hopes of achieving legal access
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ferent methods: through the enormous taxes that it levies on both the CFE and Pemex and by forcing them to seek financing in the domestic and international markets.⁴ Finance Ministry officials have been systematically reducing investment in the generation, maintenance and distribution of electricity.

The government's argument about natural gas emphasizes Pemex's precarious financing for investment. And, even in the era of globalization, in which extreme integration and liberalization are promoted, in Mexico, the weight of gas imports in the oil balance is overestimated, to the degree of sometimes giving it the status of a national security problem.

Along these lines, the following actions have been taken:

- Building and expansion of CFE installations have stagnated. The new

plants in the national electricity system are owned by independent producers, not the CFE or the CLYFC.

- Encouragement of growing indebtedness. Most construction and maintenance work done is paid for through *Pidiregas*, an extremely costly contingency debt.
- Strangling, paralyzing control measures by the Ministry of Public Functions.
- Corporate transformation. Plans to divide the CFE into different companies for generation, transmission and distribution; the creation of a virtual electricity market that functions parallel to the merit order dispatch.
- Limiting activities. Neither the CLYFC nor the CFE are allowed to build electricity plants with their own resources. The CFE is only authorized to work on small projects and was also forced to sell its natural gas distribution network, going against the worldwide trend of integrating electricity, gas, water and other services.
- Application of an excessive fiscal regime on the CFE. It is being charged a nine-percent tax on fixed assets in operation, which is not charged to the independent producers, self-suppliers or co-generators.
- Removal of the CFE's and the CLYFC's best clients. Promoting, facilitating and subsidizing self-consumption by granting permits for self-supply and co-generation to big clients individ-

Investment in electricity generation and maintenance has been reduced, causing black-outs, bad service and economic losses, in order to discredit state management of the public utility.

ually or in groups of self-consumers has encouraged the development by the private sector of operations of a public utility.

THE POLITICAL STRATEGY

The main opposition to the Fox energy proposal has come from nationalists in different parties in Congress, but particularly from members of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). As part of this faction, Senator Manuel Bartlett heads up a sector of the PRI identified with positions opposing the privatization of the sector, backed by the mandate from the last National Assembly of the PRI's Political Council. Their proposal is to strengthen the CFE and Pemex, in the first case by maintaining exclusive state power over electricity so that it continues to be organized as a public service. Their proposal is to reform legislation, but not the Constitution. Along these lines, their position is that state property and strengthening of public institutions cannot be abandoned given that the state must play a fundamental role in certain strategic activities that generate public goods and that have a different dynamic from that of private companies.

The other important actors with similar positions are the electricity workers' and oil workers' unions. Mexican Electrical Workers Union (SME) leader Rosendo Flores has roundly rejected

the privatization of national electricity companies. Government strategy vis-à-vis the oil workers' union has aimed at weakening union clout through Pemexgate and the elimination of congressional immunity for Senator Ricardo Aldana due to his being implicated in the case, at the same time that it attempts to discredit the PRI and strengthen Pemex's general director.⁵

The PAN strategy consists of negotiating with forces and groups inside the PRI who do not agree with Senator Bartlett, in an attempt to "open up spaces" for their party to come on board for the reform. Basically, the PAN is trying to split up the PRI. It falls to Elba Esther Gordillo to facilitate this task. Linked to former president Salinas, Gordillo maintains a well-known close friendship with Fox and his wife; she is a former leader of the teachers' union and a very distinguished member of the PRI; her byword is to divide her party and weaken nationalist positions in the legislature. The job she has been given is to block any possibility of unity among the nationalists and to reduce their number both in the Senate and in the Chamber of Deputies.

Some PRI members clearly oriented toward the market support the structural reforms proposed by the executive. Among them are Enrique Jackson, Genaro Borrego, Alejandro Gutiérrez, Marco Antonio Fernández, Emilio Gamboa, Jorge Chávez Presa, Enrique de

la Madrid, Roberto Madrazo and the group of deputies loyal to former President Salinas.

The Fox strategy also includes flirting with legislators inside the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), some of whom, like Senator Demetrio Sodi de la Tijera, have already said that they favor elevating existing legislation on electricity to the constitutional level. Other members of the PRD think these changes should be postponed for the moment.⁶ For all these reasons, we can say that none of the parties has a unified position to stop the energy reform.

One interest group that has done heavy lobbying in Congress is the independent producers. They are fighting for "independent electricity production" to be part of the Constitution; that is, they want to legitimize legislation whose legality is currently under fire. These producers already possess 30 percent of the country's capacity for electricity generation.

CONCLUSIONS

The technical complexity of the electricity and oil industries makes it difficult for economic and political groups and/or specialists directly involved with the reform to develop alternative visions to the one presented by the government. It is not only the asymmetry in media coverage that favors the Fox project, but the complexity of the sector itself. However, there are those who understand very well that the debate is by no means trivial. What is at stake is the role of the state in the vital energy sector in Mexico. In any case, the discussion centers on the possibility of making mechanisms for private par-

ticipation more flexible with a complementary role to public investment or giving free rein to the incorporation of national and foreign private businessmen into the industry with all the legal guarantees they need for their best performance. Everything seems to indicate that gradual de facto privatization of the sector will continue even without the establishment of legal certainties, and that it will culminate only in the long run. The constitutional changes will accelerate and deepen the transfer of energy industries to the private sector. The appointment of Felipe Calderón Hinojosa as the new minister of energy is a point in favor of the country's businessmen who seek to participate in an attractive company like the CFE with sales of about U.S.\$14 billion a year. The reason behind the quest for reforms, then, is not that the national energy companies are not profitable. Quite to the contrary. It is precisely their economic attractiveness, the large profits they make, that is behind the interest of the international and, today, national, business community. Everything points to the Fox reform consisting precisely of elevating existing legislation to the constitutional level, thus giving legal certainty to producers already operating in the industry.

Nevertheless, the reforms' results are questionable in terms of their effects on the nation's economy, since it depends so greatly on economic relations with other countries, and particularly with the recovery of the U.S. economy. At least in matters of energy, Fox's proposals are not in the national interest, but favor the dictates of the neoliberal model and the demands of domestic and foreign interest groups. **MM**

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NOTES

¹ Other important changes were the replacement of Minister of the Environment Víctor Lichtinger by National Action Party activist Alberto Cárdenas, and the appointment of right-wing economist Luis Pazos to head up the National Public Works Bank.

² At the end of 2001, Pemex announced its intention of asking oil companies for their help in increasing the production of non-oil-associated natural gas. The first place to be developed would be the Burgos Basin. These companies would participate through multiple service contracts (CSM), which, according to Pemex, did not require legislative changes to be applied. This strategy is justified using four general premises: 1) the urgency of expanding national gas production to deal with rapidly growing demand; 2) Pemex's lack of capital for increasing production given the apparent impossibility of obtaining it in the short and medium terms given public budget limitations; 3) the need for sophisticated technology and oil companies' experience to develop the Burgos Basin; 4) signaling the structural changes in the country. While the legal complications of these *sui generis* contracts are both numerous and complex, one of the most important is linked to the fact that the contractor would have the right to carry out exploration and development (both banned by the Constitution), transportation and storage of natural gas and condensed products in a specific area for a period of 20 years. They could build and operate pipelines and gas processing plants. From the moment that Pemex announced its intention of calling on international oil companies, different sectors of society have objected. They question both the form and the content of the measure, as well as the arguments used to justify it. For them, there are technical, economic, legal, political and strategic reasons why exploration and extraction of gas should not be opened up. They also object to the terms of

the negotiation established in the proposed contract.

³ One of the pillars of financing the CFE has been *Pidiregas* (Deferred Impact Projects in Spending). Private investment in the financing of infrastructure for generation, transmission and transformation is done through *Pidiregas* in its two forms: through external producers of energy (generation) and through the participation of private entities in financed public works. In the first case, the investment is owned by private entities; in the second case, the infrastructure becomes property of the CFE when the investment contract expires.

⁴ In this sense, in recent public statements the programming manager of the Central Mexico Light and Energy Company, Carlos Crowley Pérez, emphasized the need for the company to invest 11 billion pesos in 2004. Otherwise, he said the company would run the risk of having more black-outs because it would not be able to cover the public's demand. *El Heraldo de México*, 11 September 2003, p. 3F.

⁵ "Pemexgate" refers to the scandal in which public funds—at least U.S.\$50 million and perhaps up to U.S.\$150 million—were diverted to finance the PRI's 2000 electoral campaign. Several leaders of the oil workers' union intervened in that operation, now fully documented and judged, including Senator Aldana. The scandal led to the Federal Electoral Institute, the body in charge of regulating Mexico's electoral processes, fining the PRI approximately U.S.\$100 million, which will be withheld from the stipend they would normally receive under the law. [Editor's Note.]

⁶ This is the position of Senator Jesús Ortega.

The Profile of Mexico's Citizenry

Rubén R. García Clarck*



Nahn Stephens / Cuartoscuro

Several aspects of the process of democratic consolidation in Mexico are still to be resolved, not only with regard to institutional reforms, but also in matters of political culture and civic practices. In effect, issues on the national political agenda include: a) regulation of primary elections and the right to vote for Mexicans abroad; b) the adoption of mechanisms and attitudes favoring a more productive relationship among the different branches

of government; c) increased civic participation and channels for it; and d) a greater commitment of authorities and citizens to the rule of law.

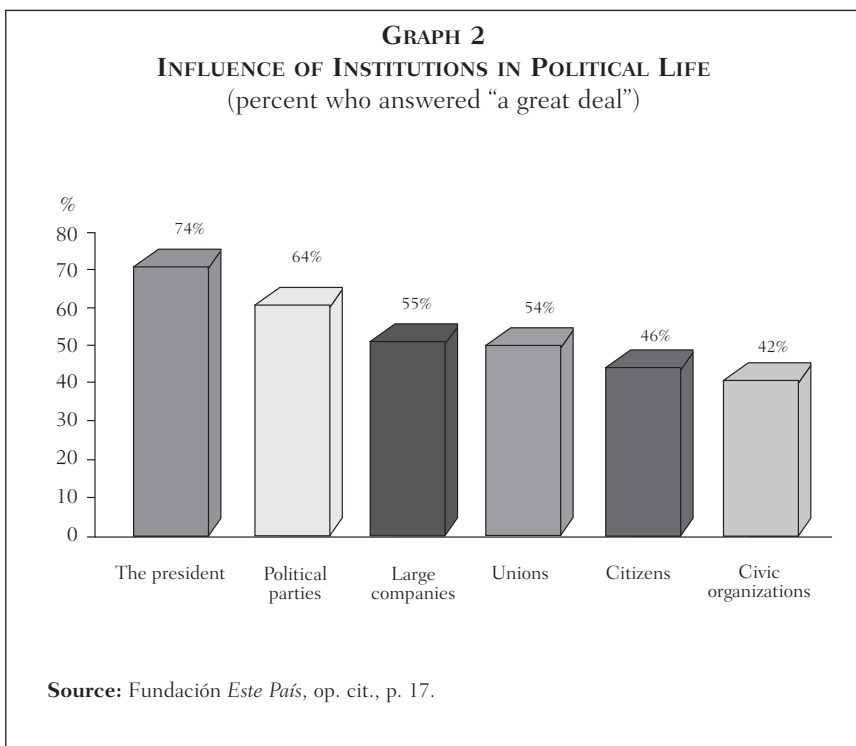
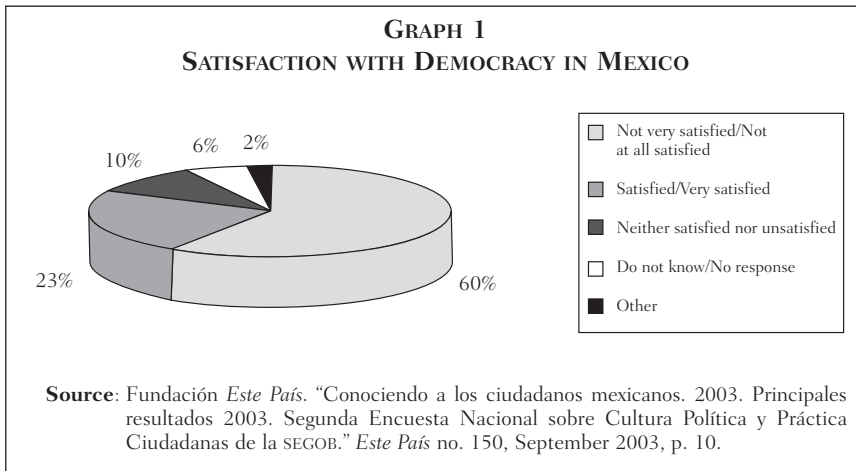
The country's democratic institutions require a political culture and practice to make them functional to guarantee sufficient levels of governability. It is true that the latter also depend on satisfactory economic performance. Thus, the battle must be fought on all fronts.

Political culture and civic practices in Mexico have undergone important transformations in recent decades. U.S. researchers, like Gabriel Almond, Sidney Verba, Ann Craig, Wayne A. Cornelius,

Roderic Ai Camp and Pippa Norris, among others, have contributed significantly to their study and analysis.¹

Generally speaking, Mexico has gone from a political culture founded on revolutionary nationalism to a democratic culture, from the acceptance by the majority of a hegemonic party to that majority's preference for political pluralism. However, the public's support for the political system and a participatory role continue to be more abstract than concrete; this may be associated with different variables, among which are the public's scant satisfaction with democracy's results and the little civic

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trust in political institutions and individuals.

This can be seen in the Second National Survey on Political Culture and Civic Practices, carried out by Mexico's Ministry of the Interior in February this year, the results of which were announced recently.

According to this survey, the majority of Mexicans prefer to retain freedom of expression if faced with the option of losing it in exchange for the e-

limination of economic pressure. This opinion coincides with the last poll by the company *Latinobarómetro*, which reports that 53 percent of Mexicans prefer a democratic regime to an authoritarian one.

The preference for democracy does not equal satisfaction with its concrete results, since 60 percent of those questioned said they were "not very satisfied" or "not at all satisfied" with democracy in Mexico (see graph 1).

This dissatisfaction may be associated with the fact that 59.8 percent of those surveyed see the direction the country is taking as inappropriate, while 54 percent think Mexico's economy is in bad or very bad shape.

On the other hand, the Ministry of the Interior survey reports certain public recognition of the important role that political institutions and the citizens themselves play, as well as a positive opinion of pluralism. Thus, 74 percent, 64 percent and 46 percent, respectively, consider that the president, the parties and the citizenry have a great deal of influence on the nation's political life, while 50.4 percent consider that they are all necessary for the country to improve (see graph 2). At the same time, 44.3 percent of those surveyed thought that all the parties should make the important decisions in the Chamber of Deputies.

It should be noted that the recognition of the importance of political parties and pluralism is affected by the public's distrust and feelings of being divorced from them. On a scale of one to 10 evaluating trust of different political and social institutions, political parties come in at 6.4, next to the last place, besting only the police (see graph 3).

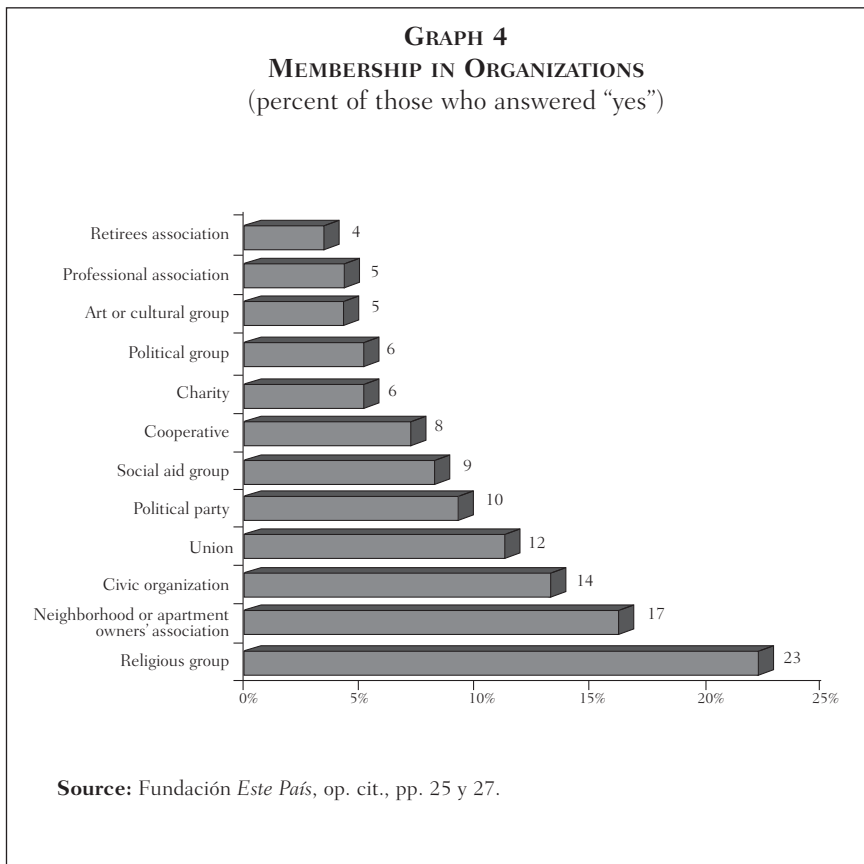
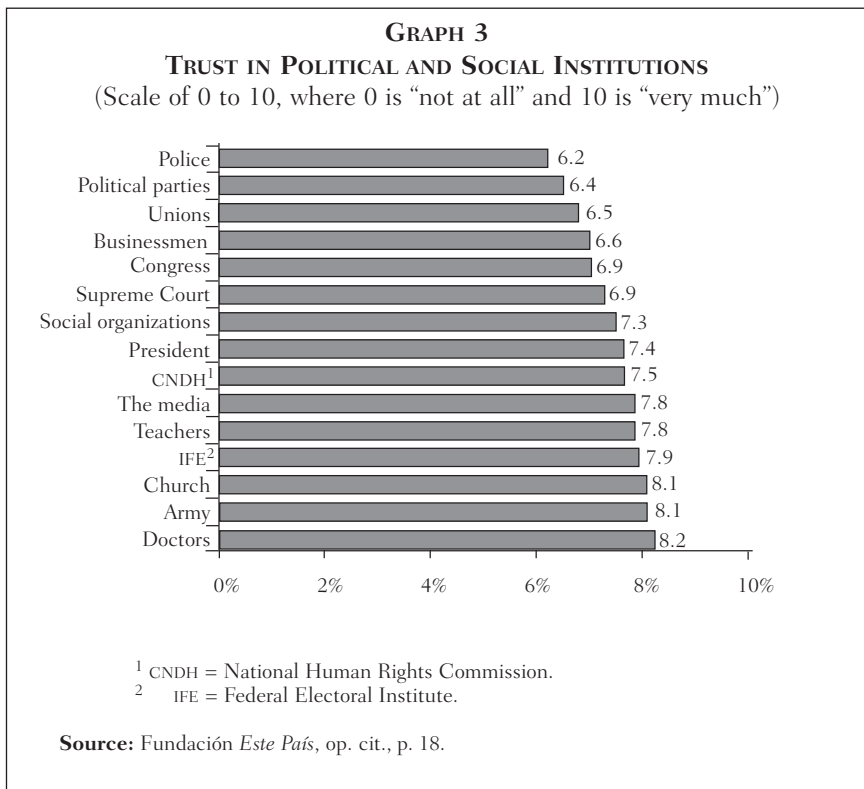
In addition, when making laws, 53 percent of those polled think deputies take the interests of their parties into account before the interests of the population; this shows that those polled perceive party interests and the citizens' interests as different, if not opposed. As if that were not enough, other surveys show a drop in the identification of the citizenry with any political party.² In this sense, the scant civic participation (41.7 percent) in last July's federal elections is no less eloquent. In light of these figures, we can speak of

a crisis of representation of the political parties that may be linked to the weakening of the ideologies and political actors current during the Cold War and to the decline in the national-popular state challenged by globalization.

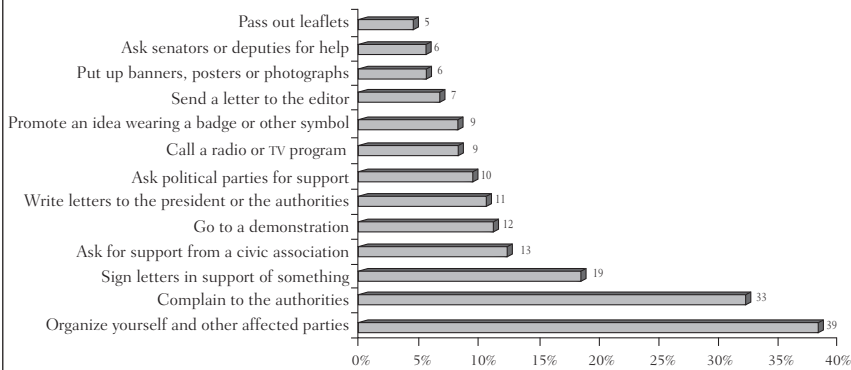
Those polled also consider the role of the citizenry important in public and community life: 71 percent think that people are the ones who should do something about the problems that public officials try to solve; 67 percent disagree with the idea that the public has nothing to say about what the government does; 51 percent think that people owe their first allegiance to their communities and only in second place to their own well being; and 49 percent think citizens are influential in national political life. Another example of the feeling those polled have about the co-responsibility shared by government officials and the governed is the following fact: 59 percent recognize that citizens are the ones who allow corruption to exist.

This recognition of the weight of the citizenry in collective life, in accordance with the meaning of the idea of citizenship that 58 percent of those polled have (having rights and obligations or responsibilities), contrasts with the low level of civic participation revealed by the Ministry of the Interior survey, both in terms of belonging to civic, social or political organizations and in terms of being involved in activities aimed at solving common problems (see graphs 4 and 5).

These low levels of civic participation may be linked to negative opinions about politics, laws and the effectiveness of civic action. Thus, 87 percent of those polled said they were not at all interested or not very interested in politics; 54 percent said that the laws

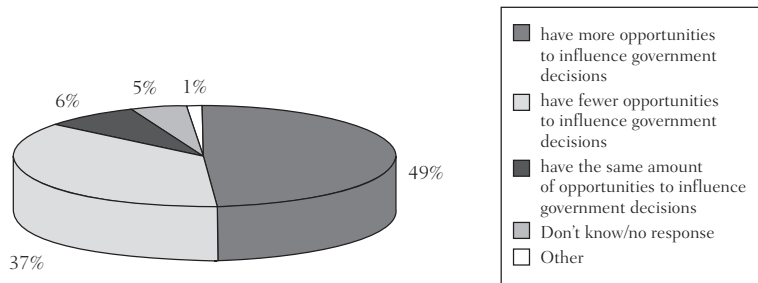


GRAPH 5
ACTIONS TO SOLVE PROBLEMS
AFFECTING THE INDIVIDUAL OR OTHERS
 (percent of those who answered “yes”)



Source: Fundación *Este País*, op. cit., p. 27.

GRAPH 6
 ¿DO YOU THINK THAT CITIZENS WILL...?



Source: Fundación *Este País*, op. cit., p. 30.

in Mexico are used to defend the interests of people with power or as an excuse for committing arbitrary acts; 57 percent think that citizens can have little or no influence in government decisions; and 56 percent think it is difficult or very difficult to organize themselves with other citizens to work for a common cause. The feeling of civic ineffectiveness, clear in the last two questions, may be linked to the low index of interpersonal trust that

those polled showed: 88 percent said that if you do not take care of yourself, people will take advantage of you, and 72 percent said that most people are only concerned about themselves.

In open, but encouraging, contradiction with some of these figures, 46 percent of those surveyed said they were in the habit of watching or listening to the news or programs about politics every day; 84 percent thought that the police should be used to force

those who break the law to obey it; 64 percent think the police should be used against demonstrators who snarl up traffic; and 56 percent think that most people show solidarity. These figures show a modicum of interest in politics, preference for legality and interpersonal trust that could be the basis for launching a citizenry committed to public matters and willing to work for common interests in the framework of the law. It is also encouraging that 49 percent of those polled said they believed that in the future, citizens will have more opportunities to have an impact on government decisions (see graph 6).

It is in our interest to strengthen these reserves of social capital in Mexico, both in the sphere of institutional reforms and at the level of forming a civic culture and also to rescue politics from the disrepute it has fallen into thanks to corruption, apathy, incompetence, video-politics and electoral marketing, and to turn it into a factor for coalescence around a social order including everyone and into a space for democratic deliberation, accountability and the convergence of efforts for constructing the public good. **MM**

NOTES

¹ See Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture. Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963); Ann Craig and Wayne A. Cornelius, “Political Culture in Mexico. Continuities and Revisionist Interpretations,” Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture Revisited* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1980); Roderic Ai Camp, *Politics in Mexico* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Pippa Norris, “La participación ciudadana: México desde una perspectiva comparativa,” Santiago Creel Miranda et al., *Deconstruyendo la ciudadanía. Avances y retos en el desarrollo de la cultura democrática en México* (Mexico City: Miguel Ángel Porrúa/SEGOB/SEP/IFE/CIDE/ITAM, 2002).

² See Alejandro Moreno, *El votante mexicano. Democracia, actitudes políticas y conducta electoral* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2003), pp. 32-33.

Drugs, International Crime And National Security

The Case of the Northern Border Area

Simone Lucatello*



Germaín Romero / Cuartoscuro

At the beginning of this millennium, the threat of drugs and the transnational crime associated with them has reached a magnitude such that we need to rethink the traditional ways of understanding the problem. This article will review the relationship between drugs and national security, with particular attention to the current situation in Mexico's northern border area.

Currently, the drug problem goes way beyond addiction and organized crime: in recent years the issue has involved more than law enforcement and traditional health sectors, such as prevention, treatment and rehabilitation, and has entailed a much broader political and socio-economic sphere including everything from national security to the very development of the nation. According to UN Office on Drugs and Crime figures, in the year 2000, the world's drug industry was worth about U.S.\$800 billion,¹ while for the same year total official aid for development came to U.S.\$52 billion.² In many developing countries, drugs are already a means—sometimes the only means—for economic survival.

In Mexico and many other Latin American countries, the transition to democracy brings with it problems linked to the nature of a political system in which some institutional practices foreign to the new democracy continue to be important and perpet-

uate a kind of “tacit coexistence” with criminal and illegal activities that seriously damages state legitimacy.³ Simultaneously with the transition, the last few years have seen the emergence of new, influential transnational actors who carry out illegal activities and have an important effect in some regions of the world. Transnational drug mafias, for example, are a grave threat to every nation's international and domestic security. In the case of Mexico, the main consequence of the strength of these illegal transnational actors is the state's inability to effectively control their actions in its sovereign territory,

other, a noticeable, growing presence of agents who threaten domestic stability, carry out illegal activities and have sufficient transnational power to cause instability in the system of security and governability. In addition, specifically with regard to drugs, the trend in recent years has been that not only are they produced in great quantities for industrialized countries—Mexico is the world's foremost producer of marijuana—but domestic consumption has also increased, creating a dual dependency, both physical and economic, with fatal consequences for the nation's sustainable human development.

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with the resulting risk of instability and even ungovernability.

Today, in this country, there is a juxtaposition between functional actors of modernization and democratization, on the one hand, and on the

According to recent figures, in Mexico, 3.5 million people between the ages of 12 and 65 have consumed drugs at least once, not counting tobacco and alcohol. The North is the most affected, with a 7.45 percent

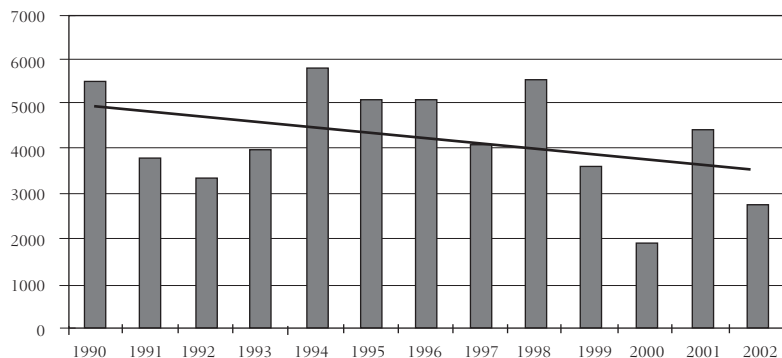
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TABLE 1
POPPY CULTIVATION AND OPIUM PRODUCTION, MEXICO (1990-2002)

Substance	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Opium Poppies (hectares)	5450	3765	3310	3960	579	5050	5100	4000	5500	360	1900	4400	2700
Opium (tons)	62	41	40	49	6	53	54	46	60	4	21	71	47

Source: United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC), *Global Illicit Drug Trends*, Vienna, 2003.

GRAPH 1
TENDENCY OF OPIUM POPPY CULTIVATION, MEXICO (1990-2002)
(HECTARES)



Source: United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC), *Global Illicit Drug Trends*, Vienna, 2003.

In Mexico, 3.5 million people between the ages of 12 and 65 have consumed drugs at least once, not counting tobacco and alcohol. The North is the most affected, with a 7.45 percent consumption rate.

consumption rate, much higher than the national average rate of 5.27 percent. The cities with higher rates than the national average are Tijuana, Mexicali and Ciudad Juárez. The North has the highest rate for both marijuana and cocaine consumption.⁴

The northern border has become the obligatory route for thousands of men and women workers and their families trying to get into the United States in search of the promise of higher wages and a new life. However, many stay on the Mexican side of the border waiting, sometimes for months, for the opportunity to cross; during their waiting period they lack basic social services.

A study of children and adolescents from 100 Mexican cities also showed that the states with the highest risk of drug consumption were those along

the northern border; once again, Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez had the highest rates.⁵

In addition, it is important to note that payment in kind (in drugs) among drug traffickers has brought with it the transformation of areas traditionally considered transit zones, like the border region, into “high consumption” areas, with the corresponding rise in the number of drug addicts in these communities and a clear drop in the age of first consumption.

Drug use not only brings with it physical and/or mental problems, but also changes the socio-cultural surroundings of the user because of his/her addictive behavior. On the other hand, generalized high consumption levels also leads to high-risk behavior patterns for other associated problems such as

violence or the transmission of highly contagious diseases like HIV/AIDS.

Some cities along the northern border also have a higher rate of violence toward children. Schooling levels have not increased; only five out of every 10 children complete their basic education and this drop-out rate is linked to the growth in drug use among this age group in cities where drug trafficking and a lack of public safety are world famous.

For example, in Ciudad Juárez, “drug trafficking, organized crime and gangs have grown in recent years. This has propitiated an increase in the use of drugs, firearms and insecurity for border city residents.”⁶ Ciudad Juárez is the Mexican city with the highest rates of child abuse and family violence. The weak social security system, the lack of preventive programs and family violence levels indicate a system of family and gender relations with exacerbated asymmetries and exclusions. It is a society that is increasingly fragmented.

Multiple unsolved sexual crimes (rape) and serial murders have taken the lives of more than 300 women in this city over the last decade. In these murders, linked to drug trafficking and organized crime, 56 percent of the victims were under 19 years of age.⁷ In addition, sexual violence toward children and among children is growing exponentially. The result has been the gradual creation of a culture of impunity and socialization of violence.

Both antisocial behavior linked to violence and drug abuse are closely related since both have their origins in the growing socio-cultural fragmentation of the affected areas. Equally, these same risk factors cause a rapid expansion of infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS, and the use of addictive substances

leads to the irresponsible practice of high-risk sex.

The first case of AIDS in Mexico was reported in 1983. By September 2001, slightly more than 40,000 cases had been reported, with a ratio of six men for every woman. The first case was associated with intravenous drug use and homosexual relations, while the first case associated exclusively with intravenous drug use was reported in 1986. Currently, the country has 466 cases of AIDS associated with intravenous drug use, most along the northern border. There, HIV rates are lower among men who have sexual relations

solves short-term liquidity problems, but in the long term increases poverty and establishes a system of dependence that can only be controlled with great difficulty.

- Environmental security: the eradication of drug crops through fumigation, deforestation and other destruction techniques has devastating effects on the ecosystem and soil erosion.
- Community security: corruption and drug-linked crime can lead to conflicts in the community itself, with consequences for migration and, in the long run, the slow disintegration of the community.

Payment in kind (in drugs) among drug traffickers has brought with it the transformation of areas traditionally considered transit zones, like the border region, into "high consumption" areas.

with men than in the rest of the country, but almost 20 times higher than in the general population and five times higher than among sex workers.⁸

Uncontrolled drug production, trafficking and abuse are threats to security, not only of individuals, but for the sustainable development of the nation as a whole. We can state some general conclusions about the impact of drugs on national security, which particularly affects some of our country's strategic areas:

- The economy: Government failure to control production and trafficking has a negative effect on the national gross domestic product and strengthens the non-formal economy. Agricultural production of marijuana and opium poppies and other drugs re-

- Direct effects on border security: drug traffickers' border crossings and attempts to maintain their own security through high-caliber weapons connects drug sales, arms trafficking and the influence of para-military groups, which are very difficult for a weak government to deal with.

That is, the production, unwarranted use and trafficking of drugs are activities that can affect the security not only of the nation and individuals but also of concrete communities. As we have seen, drugs, combined with other variables like AIDS, for example, make communities vulnerable and can even lead to the generation of social conflicts and a crisis of governability.

Although Mexico has made the important decision of signing and ratify-

ing the Convention of Palermo, the UN accord against transnational organized crime that will come into effect on September 29 this year, as long as urgent reforms are not made to strengthen state institutions and make law enforcement effective, the growth of organized crime and drug abuse will continue to be a grave threat to the state. **MM**

NOTES

¹ UNODC, Introduction, *United Nations World Drug Report* (Vienna: UNODC, 2000).

² UN Development Program, *Informe sobre el Desarrollo Humano 2002*. www.undp.org.mx/desarrollohumano

³ John Bailey and Roy Godson, eds., *Organized Crime & Democratic Governability: Mexico and the U.S.-Mexican Borderlands* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), p. 135.

⁴ Consejo Nacional contra las Adicciones (Conadic), *Resumen Ejecutivo, Encuesta Nacional de Adicciones México* (Mexico City: Conadic, 2002), p. 19.

⁵ DIF/ONUDD/UNICEF, "Yo también cuento! Estudio de niñas, niños y adolescentes trabajadores en 100 ciudades" (Mexico City: Servicio Fototipográfico, S.A., 2001).

⁶ Amnistía Internacional, "Muertes intolerables; México. Diez años de desapariciones y asesinatos de mujeres en Ciudad Juárez," Proyecto AMR 41/027/2003 (Mexico City), 11 August 2003.

⁷ Many Mexican NGOs put the number of women who have disappeared at 400. The fact is that in a significant number of cases in the state of Chihuahua, young women and teenagers—one case involved an 11-year-old girl—disappear and are found dead days or even years later. According to Amnesty International figures, in 10 years, about 370 women have been murdered, of whom at least 137 were the victims of sexual violence. Seventy-five bodies still have not been identified, some of whom may be those of women reported missing, although the lack of conclusive proof of their identities makes it impossible to confirm this hypothesis.

⁸ Secretaría de Salud, *Informe SIDA* (Mexico City: Secretaría de Salud, 2001).

The WTO after Cancún

What Is at Stake?

María Cristina Rosas*



Germán Romero / Cuartoscuro

Anti-wto demonstrators break through a police barricade in Cancún.

*To the memory of my dear friend
and colleague Mónica González*

Last September 10 to 14 in Cancún, Mexico hosted the Fifth Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in the framework of the new round of multilateral

trade negotiations agreed on in November 2001 in Doha. It is common knowledge that the meeting failed due to a lack of consensus between the developed and developing countries. This is cause for some concern for both the present and the future of the multilateral trade system.

The images speak for themselves: on the one hand, Dr. Luis Ernesto Derbez, Mexico's minister of foreign relations, was visibly affected by recognizing, much

to his regret, the failure of the meeting. On the other hand, activists and representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society celebrated the news. However, in practice, rich and poor, governmental and non-governmental actors alike lose with this outcome. Why?

After the trade agreements discussed in the Uruguay Round from 1986 to 1994 came into effect, dissatisfaction was expressed in many ways in coun-

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tries throughout the world, particularly in the least developed ones, given that they were faced with the obligation to comply with the commitments made at the same time that they lacked the human and material capabilities to do so. To that we would have to add that many developing countries opened up their markets in accordance with the Uruguay Round, at a very high cost in terms of competitiveness, productivity and the unavoidable adjustments that have to be made with the dismantling of protective mechanisms for domestic economies. Countries like the Caribbean nations noted, for example, that complying with the Agreement on Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) would have a cost that their economies would not be able to absorb unless there was decisive cooperation from the countries of the North.

Between the Uruguay and the Doha Rounds, there was an extremely serious crisis that began with the Second WTO Ministerial Meeting in Geneva, but developed fully in Seattle's Third Ministerial Meeting. There, both the internal disagreements among the different country delegations and the protectionist, anti-globalization and anti-WTO/free trade feelings behind the violent demonstrations in the city's streets led to a virtual paralysis of the multilateral trade negotiations and discouragement on the part of the different countries because of what is still considered the crisis of the multilateral trade system.

The WTO's Fourth Ministerial Meeting took place at a very singular moment: the international agenda was oriented—as it continues to be today—toward the fight against terrorism, after the dramatic events of September 11, 2001. Also, it was held in Qatar, a remote lo-

The “Doha issues” are not subject to formal negotiations, but have only been dealt with in working groups that seem to be more for semi-academic reflection than for political negotiations to get commitments from the more prosperous nations for developing the poorest.

cation, in an attempt to avoid another Seattle.¹ Participating delegations knew that a new failure at Doha would lead to the virtual collapse of the WTO only six years after its inception, with unacceptable political and economic costs. It was in these conditions that they agreed to the beginning of the Doha Round.

THE DOHA ROUND: AGENDA AND NEGOTIATIONS SCHEDULE

The agenda agreed on in Doha, in an effort to cut short negotiation times and avoid paralysis and stagnation like those experienced with the Uruguay Round, is very broad. Another difficulty is that the aim is that by January 1, 2005, there be a single commitment; this reduces negotiating time to eight or nine months, taking into account recesses for Christmas and summer.

These dates have to be analyzed carefully given that many countries are carrying out bilateral and regional trade negotiations, which carries with it the risk of overtaxing the best expert negotiators, involving them in different agendas. This could affect their performance and participation on the multilateral playing field.

The Doha agenda includes a broad variety of issues that, given their complexity and time restrictions, will almost certainly not be dealt with appropriate-

ly. The agenda includes the “Singapore issues” (so-called because they were initially agreed upon at the First WTO Ministerial Conference in Singapore in 1996): investments, policies on competition, government procurement and facilitation of trade. In addition, there are other thorny topics like agriculture, services, intellectual property and the relationship between trade and the environment (see chart). To these are added the topics that developing countries have insisted be included as a fundamental part of the negotiations; outstanding among them are trade, debt and finances and trade and the transfer of technology, which could well be called “Doha issues” since it was in the Fourth WTO Ministerial Meeting that they were accepted as part of the agenda.

However, as shown in the chart, the “Doha issues” are not subject to formal negotiations, but have only been dealt with in working groups that seem to be more for semi-academic reflection than for political negotiations to get commitments from the more prosperous nations for developing the poorest. This is why the idea of calling the Doha Round the “Round for Development” is inappropriate.

Some issues are the cross-cutting themes of the Doha Round: not only the “Singapore issues”, but especially the negotiations about trade in agricultural products. In the Uruguay Round, a series of norms were established in three

With things as they stand, even though there is a precarious consensus and a political mandate to continue with the Doha Round, the road the WTO faces will be a rocky one. The risk of such a broad agenda is that disagreements may arise at key moments.

areas: improving market access, reduction of domestic subsidies and reduction of subsidies to exports. However, the topic has historically given rise to non-trade and political considerations blocking a consensus to liberalize the sector.

AGRICULTURE, THE BACKBONE OF THE DOHA ROUND

Today, the Doha Round's negotiation on agriculture once again faces the politization of the agenda; disagreements among the United States, the European Union and the Cairns Group, among other influential actors; and the protectionism that the Bush administration fostered in 2002 basically for electoral reasons.²

The developing countries are particularly concerned with the issue of market access, including tariff caps and the problem that arises when a non-tariff barrier becomes a tariff under the provisions of the Uruguay Round. Thus, numerous processes of tariff creation have produced very high duties. In the agricultural, fishing and food industry sectors, prohibitively high tariffs (higher than 100 percent) exist as a result, precisely, of this process of tariff creation.

Food security and the fight against hunger also deserve particular attention. The so-called Millennium Goals, agreed upon in the UN General As-

sembly in 2000, establish the primary commitment to eradicating hunger and extreme poverty and cutting in half the number of persons living on less than a dollar a day by the year 2015. Unfortunately, given the stipulations of the Uruguay Round, once export subsidies are withdrawn from products with large subsidies (wheat), their international prices tend to rise substantially. In addition, the reduction of domestic subsidies will cause notable instability in the agricultural sector because government food stocks will dwindle, putting at risk these products' availability. It is not necessary to emphasize that this puts forward a Dantesque scenario for many countries, particularly developing countries (like those of sub-Saharan Africa), which are net food importers.

THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE WHAT'S AT STAKE

Unfortunately, the developing nations have limited negotiating capacity. Many African countries cannot even maintain a permanent delegation in Geneva, which marginalizes them from the most important discussions. On the other hand, something that should not be underestimated is that even though continual bilateral, regional and/or multilateral trade negotiations go on in the world, only a few countries have experience and so-called bargaining capabilities.

Another particular that should be considered is that developing countries' participation in international trade is marginal. Suffice it to mention that the Latin American and Caribbean portion of world trade went from 12 percent in 1950 to 5 percent in the 1990s. Even countries like Mexico, included among the world's large exporters, base their participation on the sale of products assembled domestically but with imported inputs. In 1983, Mexican exports had 85.9 percent national content, but by 1996, national content had dropped to 41.8 percent. This could increase if an industrial policy were developed that aimed to recover productive chains based on competitiveness—not based on autarchy or protectionism. In other words, as long as developing countries' participation in world trade continues to be marginal, they will most likely not have an impact on the negotiations carried out by the rest of the world's nations.

With things as they stand, even though there is a precarious consensus and a political mandate to continue with the Doha Round, the road the WTO faces will be a rocky one. The risk of such a broad agenda is that disagreements may arise at key moments. The "green room," on the one hand, and the "single undertaking" (that is, the premise that "nothing is negotiated until everything has been negotiated"), on the other, will be challenged: the former because of the issue of transparency and the genuine representation of the 148 members of the WTO in the main negotiations, and the latter because disagreement will inevitably arise. The temptation to exclude thorny issues will be very strong, and then, we could return to the scenario of splitting up the agenda, as happened before the Uru-

THE DOHA ISSUES

The Declaration of Doha establishes a vast negotiating agenda. In some cases, the issues require negotiation, application, analysis and/or monitoring. The following is the long list of issues, the paragraph of the declaration in which each is mentioned and what is expected from the negotiations.

ISSUE	PARAGRAPH IN THE DECLARATION OF DOHA	TASK
Implementation-related issues and others	12	Some require negotiation
Agriculture	13, 14	Negotiations
Services	15	Negotiations
Market access for non-agricultural products	16	Negotiations
Trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights	17, 18, 19	Negotiations
Relationship between trade and development	20, 21, 22	Preparation for negotiations
Interaction between trade and competition policies	23, 24, 25	Preparation for negotiations
Transparency in government procurement	26	Preparation for negotiations
Facilitation of trade	27	Preparation for negotiations
WTO rules: anti-dumping	28	Negotiations
WTO rules: subsidies	28	Negotiations
WTO rules: regionalization processes	29	Negotiations
Understanding in dispute settlement	30	Negotiations
Trade and the environment	31, 32, 33	Negotiations
Electronic commerce	34	Work by the General Council
Small economies	35	Work by the General Council
Trade, debt and finance	36	New working group
Trade and transfer of technology	37	New working group
Technical cooperation and capacity building	38, 39, 40, 41	Work by the General Council and the General Secretariat
Least-developed countries	42, 43	Work in different bodies
Special and differential treatment	44	Work in different bodies

guay Round. If that happened, WTO negotiations would not advance as scheduled, but at different speeds, and the issues that would tend to be avoided would be the ones that most concern the developing countries.

Basically, the most important debate is about finding the mechanisms that make it possible to include the developing countries in international trade,

but in less unfavorable conditions than those that exist today. And while the WTO has many drawbacks, it is perhaps the only possible forum for these debates.

It is devoutly to be wished, therefore, that the failure at Cancún be overcome, just as after the Seattle collapse, it was possible to come to some consensuses at Doha. ■■■

NOTES

¹ The participation of NGOs at this meeting was very limited.

² The 2002 Farm Security and Rural Investment Act, better known as the Farm Bill, authorized U.S. \$180 billion in subsidies to U.S. growers. Bush said this was justified because of the slowdown in the U.S. economy. These subsidies severely jolted the hard-won existing consensus in favor of agricultural negotiations in the Doha Round. In practice, the U.S. president bet on this support allowing him to strengthen the Republican Party in the southern states in the November 2002 elections.

Recession, Unemployment And Privatization Vicente Fox Halfway Through

Enrique Pino Hidalgo*



The unemployed in Mexico City's central Zócalo Plaza.

Pedro Valterra / Cuartoscuro

On the eve of his September 1 report to the nation, Vicente Fox's administration was facing a delicate economic and political-electoral scenario. The rate of open unemployment had practically dou-

bled; security indexes had diminished modestly; and economic activity continued to stagnate. Certainly, Mexicans are not experiencing the best of all possible worlds. One of the economic recession's political effects was the setback for the governing National Action Party (PAN) in the July 6 balloting for federal deputies in which it received only 30 percent of the nation's votes.

During the administration's first 33 months, approximately 1.5 million Mexicans lost their jobs and source of income in the formal economy. About 45,500 jobs were lost every month in the country's urban areas. As never before, increased unemployment in Mexico has spurred emigration to the United States.

The U.S. recession and its devastating effects on the Mexican economy

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have heightened this trend. Recent estimates indicate that remittances from Mexicans working in the U.S. will reach a record high of U.S.\$10.5 billion in 2003. The International Monetary Fund calculates that by the end of the decade, remittances will total U.S.\$16 billion, or 40 percent of all the hard currency Latin American immigrants will send to their countries of origin.¹

According to National Statistics Institute (INEGI) figures, the country's open unemployment rate rose from 1.9 percent in December 2000 to 3.5 percent in July 2003.² Among women, the figures are even more serious: open unemployment rose from 3.12 percent among women in July 2002 to 3.73 percent in July 2003.³

In production, unemployment reached 18.5 percent in manufacturing, hard hit by the closing of more than 500 maquiladora export plants, while in construction, the figure is 6.2 percent.⁴ This is the highest unemployment rate in Mexico since 1998, the year of "the first crisis of the new global economy."

FOX'S CAMPAIGN PROMISES

In the 2000 electoral campaign, Vicente Fox committed himself to fostering economic growth and creating 1.35 million new jobs a year. Later, when he first took office, he brought his promise down to 700,000 new jobs a year. To reach the 1.35-million figure, the Mexican economy would have to have grown between six and seven percent. The reality has been different. By 2003, World Bank forecasts calculate that the gross domestic product (GDP) will barely surpass one percent growth.

Orthodox liberal economic policy has been obsessed by a debatable "macroeconomic health" incapable of putting the country on the path of growth with job creation and higher incomes.

Unfortunately, the three years of President Fox's administration have been marked by recessive trends. In 2001, the GDP grew barely 0.3 percent; in 2002, 0.9 percent; and in 2003 forecasts put it at slightly more than one percent, much lower than the oft-mentioned official goal of three percent. Under these conditions, the Banco de Mexico, or central bank, had to recognize that there is still a risk that the economic recovery would be "slower than expected and not sustainable for a prolonged period of time."⁵

It is true that the paralysis of Mexico's economy is mainly due to the recession in the United States, particularly the drop in Mexican exports to our neighbor to the north. However, it is also due to the dearth of Mexican government initiatives to reactivate production and the domestic market. Mexican officials have limited themselves to hoping that the factor that would rekindle growth would be the vitality and time with which industrial production grows in the United States.

Given the damage caused by the recession, different sectors of society have said that Mexico's economic strategy, centered on the export of manufactured goods to the U.S. market and on financing based on foreign capital flows, has reached its limits. It is a strategy aimed at the globalized economy, that is, oriented by trade and financial deregulation, which has confirmed a deep

dependence and vulnerability vis-à-vis the U.S. recession.

THE "GOVERNMENT OF CHANGE" MAINTAINED ECONOMIC LIBERALISM

Linked from the time of his campaign to powerful industrial and financial groups, President Fox decided on continuity in economic matters. The economic cabinet has maintained relative macroeconomic stability: low inflation, a moderate drop in active interest rates (for bank loans) and a peso firm against the dollar. However, exchange rate stability began to shift in July and August. Almost 20 percent overvalued, the Mexican peso has weakened to the point of surpassing the 11 peso-per-dollar mark at the end of August, accumulating losses of 2.85 percent for that month.⁶

Besides the lack of initiatives for dealing with stagnation, analysts have observed that the liberal economic model immoderately emphasizes price and exchange-rate stabilization and "healthy" public finances to avoid risks and uncertainty for local and foreign investors. These are indispensable prerequisites for foreign capital flows seeking high earnings, minimal risk and greater profitability for their investments in Latin America and the Asian Pacific.⁷ In any case, orthodox liberal economic policy has been obsessed by a debatable "macroeconomic health" incapable of putting the country on the

Fox's cabinet went through a kind of de facto privatization. This is no exaggeration if we remember that the president himself defined his team as "a government of businessmen for businessmen."

path of growth with job creation and higher incomes for the majority of the population.

This has disappointed the public, causing an unquestionable drop in the president's popularity, expressed in the ruling party's electoral reverses and the recovery of the previous ruling party (the Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI). At the same time, the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) barely got 18 percent of the national vote, although it maintains a broad electoral majority in Mexico City.

THE ENTREPRENEURIAL STYLE OF GOVERNMENT: LACK OF EXPERIENCE AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Known as the "*gabinetazo*" or the "super cabinet," President Fox's governing team has performed modestly in the extreme. Initially, an anonymous group of head hunters took responsibility for selecting the Mexicans most capable of governing the country. The result was a blurry copy of the U.S. model that tends to join conspicuous members and representatives of the business community's economic power with political power in a single team: something none of the classics of modern political sociology would have recommended.

Under these conditions, President Fox's cabinet is a combination of successful businessmen and conservative politicians only recently introduced to

the exercise of power. Perhaps for that reason, specialists were not surprised that the new governing group lacked a project for the country; in the best of cases, it barely managed to display some aspects of a vision of the Mexican nation as a large corporation. This is nothing new, but is brought home more forcefully in the political discourse colored with expressions borrowed from corporate accounting, the ideology of excellence and productivism.

Mr. Fox included Javier Usabiaga, a successful veteran agribusinessman as the minister of agriculture; Ernesto Martens —removed in early September— who had been the representative of corporations Union Carbide, Vitro and Transportación Marítima Mexicana, as minister of energy. Francisco Gil Díaz had to leave his post as general director of Avantel to occupy the Ministry of Finance, and Pedro Cerisola resigned from the monopoly Teléfonos de México (Telmex) to take on the Ministry of Communications and Transportation.

The strategic state-owned oil giant Petróleos Mexicanos (Pemex) was assigned to Raúl Muñoz Leos who had previously led Dupont de México; John McCarthy, who had been the representative of important international hotel chains and the tourism division of the country's second largest commercial bank, Bancomer, was asked to head up the National Tourism Fund.⁸

Its make-up led some analysts to say that the cabinet could be the ter-

rain for conflicts of interests and the proverbial trafficking in patronage because of how close some of its members were to business activities related to their posts. The new cabinet went through a kind of de facto privatization. This is no exaggeration if we remember that Vicente Fox himself defined his team as "a government of businessmen for businessmen."

The cabinet has suffered from paralysis and a lack of initiative vis-à-vis the economy's most fundamental problems. Faced with recession and unemployment, at the end of August, President Fox announced an addition to the federal budget of a sum of 100 million pesos (less than U.S.\$10 million) for training programs and economic support for the unemployed, a preposterously small amount that would barely cover a year of minimum wage (about U.S.\$1,500) for 6,600 workers.

By reconfirming the liberal economic policy implemented by the previous three presidents, the cabinet has deepened the trends of stagnation and the concentration of income and wealth. In effect, an economic policy guided by the unrestricted play of the free market as the regulator of economic and social activity pushes economies into a contradictory whirlwind of impoverishment of the majority of the population and a dramatic concentration of wealth.⁹

THE NEW GLOBALIZING ECONOMIC ORDER: MARKET ECONOMY AND DEMOCRATIZATION

The liberal global model has two solutions for developing societies: the market economy and democratization of political systems. It specifically recommends opening up the borders of na-

tional economies to capital flows and foreign investment and to international trade, measures that will turn into jobs and improved income. This economic model pressures governments to transfer and even reduce state functions in favor of market mechanisms and free competition, that is, privatization.

In the political sphere, the globalizing proposal recommends increasing individual economic freedoms and advancing the democratization of political regimes, specifically electoral systems. However, these recommendations are questioned by the social effects of the strategy itself, which generates tendencies contrary to the creation of a democratic, equitable, transparent society favoring human rights. In addition, market- and free-competition-based policies tend to weaken the legitimacy of democratically elected governments and,

eventually, replace them with authoritarianism.¹⁰

Twenty years of applying liberal orthodox policy in Mexico has shown that macroeconomic policies based on containing aggregate demand with measures such as wage ceilings, budget cutbacks and privatization of pensions, health and educational systems are often rejected by society and met with public and union resistance. This opposition to liberal policies has even extended to sectors of small and medium-sized companies.

The application of policies restricting income, government spending and employment leads governments to lose political ground and to positions that harm their legitimacy and reduce their "political capital." The tendency of President Fox's approval ratings to drop is illustrative in this sense. Of course, the

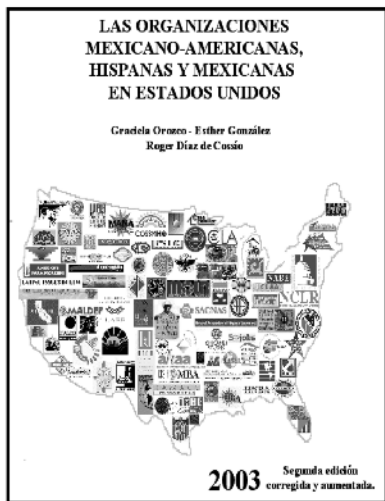
social and political crisis caused by the effects of the financial debacle in Argentina are a very significant experience.

Finally, we should say that the effects of liberal policies tend to cancel out access to jobs and social security (both health care and pensions) and, in general, limit the exercise of economic, social and cultural rights, which are indispensable for the dignity and free development of people's personalities. This is an attack on Articles 22 and 23 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In effect, then, liberalism, contrary to its stated aims, makes it impossible to create societies with equitable, satisfactory working conditions and protection against unemployment stipulated as a right in Article 23 of the Universal Declaration.



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From that point of view, we can say that the democratization of societies and full respect for human rights have a fundamental prerequisite: abandoning liberal economic policies because they promote recessions and the concentration of wealth and income.

Low growth, crisis and social and political instability are a vicious circle that must be prevented through a new economic strategy. This new strategy, without abandoning exports, must incorporate endogenous growth factors based on the reactivation of the domestic market and industry, an investment program for public infrastructure and a reduction of interest rates for loans that would be an incentive for pro-

ductive investment through commercial bank credit. **UNAM**

NOTES

- ¹ Romina Román, *El Universal*, Finance Section (Mexico City) 3 July 2003.
- ² INEGI, *Encuesta Nacional de Empleo Urbano* (Mexico City: INEGI, July 2003).
- ³ *Ibid.* One indicator that comes closer to measuring the gravity of unemployment is the “rate of critical conditions of employment” estimated at 8.91 percent for the work force. This figure includes those employed who work fewer than 35 hours a week for reasons determined by the market, those who work more than 35 hours a week with a monthly income under the minimum wage of 1,500 pesos (approximately U.S.\$136 at 11 pesos per dollar) in the informal sector and those who work more than 48 hours a week and make less than twice the minimum wage. [After receiving this article, September unemployment rates shot up: in

that month alone, 171,000 employees lost their jobs. Editor’s Note.]

- ⁴ Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social, *Boletín* (Mexico City), August 2003.
- ⁵ Banco de México, *Boletín* (Mexico City), 27 June 2003.
- ⁶ Rogelio Cárdenas, *El Financiero* (Mexico City), 26 September 2003. [In early October the dollar rose to almost 12 pesos. Editor’s Note.]
- ⁷ Marco Rossi, *Financial Fragility and Economic Performance in Developing Economies: Do Capital Controls, Prudential Regulation and Supervision Matter?* IMF working paper, May 1999.
- ⁸ Gregorio Vidal, *Grandes empresas, economía y poder en México* (Mexico City: Editorial Plaza y Valdés-UAM, 2000).
- ⁹ Víctor Soria, *Crecimiento económico, crisis estructural y evolución de la pobreza en México* (Mexico City: Editorial Plaza y Valdés-UAM, 1998).
- ¹⁰ J. and G. Burki, *Más allá del consenso de Washington* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1998).

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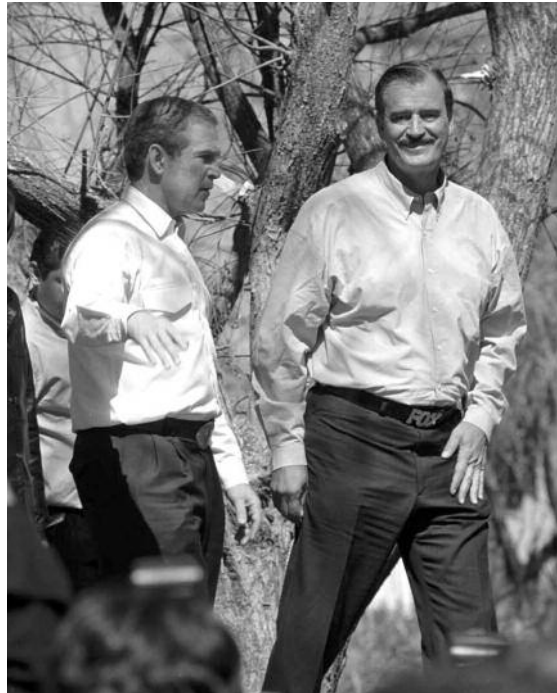
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Perspectives for Mexico-U.S. Bilateral Relations

Andrés Rozental*



The following analysis is a reflection on bilateral relations since the beginning of the current administration.¹ I think it important to scrutinize this period given the change in Mexico's government since 2000, a change in the party in power with Vicente Fox in the presidency. It is a good starting point because it can illustrate how in the brief period of a little over two and a half years, bilateral relations can evolve from euphoria to total disappointment.

On July 2, 2000, when Vicente Fox was elected president of Mexico, a new

man came into office, a man unknown abroad, who brought in an administration also made up of new faces different from the usual cast of characters in Mexico's international relations, particularly in relations with the United States. We should remember that every 12 years the presidential elections in both countries coincide. 2000 was one of those years. On July 2 it still was not clear who would win in November in the United States. In fact, it was not clear until after President Fox took office December 1. However, contacts between the two transition teams began immediately to set up a bilateral meet-

ing between the two presidents-elect and to estimate if "a new spirit" really existed, the kind once called the "spirit of Houston" and this time called the "spirit of San Cristóbal." The fact is that what I would call "good chemistry" existed between the two new presidents' teams. This obviously is related to their personalities, but also to the fact that to an important segment of the U.S. population, Vicente Fox represents the realization of a much-desired change, the need for which had been discussed in U.S. academic, governmental and business circles, a change that would substitute a years-old system stiff with age.

* Mexican ambassador.

Fox represents that change. I think that the so-called “democratic bonus” plays a fundamental role in the way in which his election was perceived in the United States, as a peaceful, ordered and calm transition, despite the fact that some observers predicted the opposite. That transition is considered a great leap forward, an achievement in the process of consolidation of a democratic system. The fact that Bush and his team came up with what they called their “new agenda” in January 2001, naturally radically different from the previous Democratic administration’s agenda, also plays an important

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role. It was a new neo-conservative agenda that put into practice all of that political current’s ideological and theoretical tenets, as has been made clear in the over two and a half years since then in the cases of Iraq, Afghanistan and North Korea.

However, at that time it was only stated in the writings of the neo-conservative thinkers of the so-called “Bush circle”, who among other things, see Mexico as a benchmark for the future of Latin America: a country that is moving peacefully toward democracy, that is betting on its economic relations with the United States, that puts issues like democracy and human rights among its first priorities, etc. Even though for the United States, Mexico always represented a more or less stable country with political continuity, with the possibilities for doing business and a good repository for its eco-

nomical interests, it continued to suffer from a series of problems underlying its political, economic and social structures that were seen in the North as obstacles to its stability, above all on its southern border. That was what things were like at the beginning of the two current administrations.

As president-elect, Vicente Fox traveled to the United States and Canada in autumn 2000. He presented Bush and Jean Chrétien with a very fresh, novel and even audacious vision of relations among the three countries, a vision that goes beyond the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

He spoke of the creation of a North American Community, of opening up the borders not only to goods and services, but also to the free transit of persons; and he put forward the beginning of a new stage, whose main objective would be taking relations among the three countries toward a model that he defined as European. This vision caused an enormous commotion in the other two countries. For the Washington establishment, the cause of the agitation was the surprise more than the content of the proposal itself: nobody had forewarned them—as diplomatic courtesy usually dictates—about what Vicente Fox was going to propose when he suddenly launched the original idea and captured the attention of the media and the public. In Canada, which was not undergoing a change in administration, officials were not so disconcerted, but they were irri-

tated by a proposal that was incompatible with Chrétien’s policy of making his bilateral relations with the United States a priority vis-à-vis an eventual trilateral accord. Therefore, before thinking about the free flow of persons and customs openings and unions—all of which is very thorny—when Chrétien met with Fox a little later, he took it upon himself to explain that Fox’s proposal was not a priority for Canada.

Although the proposal was not well received in either country, I think it had a positive effect. It meant that for the first time the bilateral agenda was set by Mexico and not the United States. I think that this is a fundamental change, since for the first time, Mexico adopted an active role, defining what it wanted to discuss in terms of regional policy; among the consequences of this is that these issues were taken up by the media, academics, diplomats and research centers in Mexico, in Toronto, in Washington and in New York. For three or four months, Fox’s proposal became the center of the debate, displacing issues that had been central to bilateral interests like migration, drug trafficking, crime on the border, extradition, etc. That is, the issues that the United States had put on the agenda were replaced overnight by a much more philosophical one: the destiny of Mexico, the United States and Canada once NAFTA comes into full effect in 2009 and a decision has to be made about the next step in integration.

Given the generally negative response, President Fox modified his discourse and instead of talking about his vision of a community as an immediate aim, he established a time scale of 20 or 30 years for its implementation, defining it as a long-term goal, as an invitation to the three governments, the

three societies, to start out on a road that might be beneficial for all.

The initiative was important because it put Mexico and Fox himself in an outstanding place on the international map; and Washington's official response, although vacillating, was not as vacillating in the media and before the public. To many it meant a big change in bilateral relations, moving from relations of adversaries-friends to those of real partners because the proposal implied a series of changes in international policy not only by the United States and Canada, but above all by Mexico. Therefore, according to specialized observers in the United States, it could be in the interests of the three countries for taking the next step after NAFTA. In the United States, the trade agreement is also to a certain extent understood as a way of tying Mexico to a free market system, a system of economic opening, political democracy and transparency, in short, everything they think the United States represents.

After Fox's initial statements, the two presidents began a honeymoon period. They met several times, came to agreements and established a relationship based fundamentally on new issues and not on the litany of traditional, conflictive issues.

The first of these new issues—or of new focuses on old issues—is migration. I will not go into this in great depth. Suffice it to say that the presidents were presented with a new proposal from a high-level working group—a working group that I had the honor of co-presiding in the name of Mexico—to base migratory negotiations on a series of original parameters that were of great interest to Mexico. At the end of 2000 (Bush was still president-elect),

we proposed a change in migratory relations that included several elements of Mexico's position:

- Fully regularizing all the several million undocumented Mexicans living in the United States.
- A temporary worker program to cover the quotas of workers who would emigrate anyway so that they could do it legally.
- A program of economic and financial aid for the creation of the infrastructure Mexico needs in order to deepen the social content of the relationship and reduce migration.

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- A change in the visa regime to substantially increase the number of Mexicans who can aspire to legally emigrate to the United States, in addition to the temporary worker program.

The two presidents welcomed this plan and began negotiations by creating a High Level Group presided over by Secretary of State Colin Powell, Attorney General John Ashcroft, Foreign Minister Jorge Castañeda and Minister of the Interior Santiago Creel.

Negotiations for the migratory accord began at this very high level in February 2001 and continued until September 11, with a series of advances and concrete proposals from both sides. Though the negotiations did not conclude, they did bring the positions much closer and led to a different vision about the migration issue both in Washington and in Mexico.

For years our government's official position has been that Mexicans can travel both domestically and abroad and enter our territory with complete freedom, with no restrictions whatsoever and no actions by the Mexican state to impede that free transit. Those who defend this position do so based on the constitutional principle of freedom of transit, very conveniently forgetting that this precept is qualified in the Constitution itself by the never-mentioned phrase, "subject to regulations adopted by the federal executive." In this case, this refers to the Population Law, which clearly stipulates that

Mexican immigration officials must be sure that when someone intends to leave the country, he/she does so with the documents required for entry into the countries he/she is traveling to. All this has been overlooked and those who implement these policies do so with a very nationalist bias, attempting to show that it is not a Mexican problem, but above all a problem of the United States.

Regardless of this, the commitment that the High Level Group (basically made up of academics and non-government personnel) proposed to the two presidents was that, in exchange for regularizing Mexicans' status in the United States, the temporary worker program, resources for infrastructure in Mexico and more visas, the Mexican government would promise to ensure that its citizens leave the country legally. Mexicans do not emigrate North

without documents because they want to; they do it because the United States does not grant them the proper papers. The key to the negotiations was to open up more possibilities for Mexicans to legally enter the United States in exchange for Mexico's cooperation to ensure an ordered, secure border.

The second issue the High Level Group negotiated was the drug trafficking certification process. For years, Mexico, like other countries, was subjected to a totally arbitrary, unilateral and even demeaning yearly process of being "certified": that is, it was evaluated by the United States with regard to its cooperation in the fight against

traditional agenda, backing away from the negative and going toward the positive.

The third matter was trade problems, some older than NAFTA and others that emerged precisely because of NAFTA itself, unresolved until now. For example, one famous issue was trucks, which for some time should have been allowed to cross the border; another was avocados, which for many, many years have been subject to "sanitary dispositions" that prevent their entry into the United States. There were half a dozen cases that had caused trade disputes, which the two presidents put a new spin on.

With regard to migration, like on other
conflictive issues, we should seek partial agreements because,
given the current international climate, it is not possible
to negotiate "the full enchilada."

drug trafficking. The first proposal made to George Bush in San Cristóbal was to cancel unilateral certification (whose main effect was bad relations with the countries certified) and move to a system of multilateral evaluation.

As a result, Mexico proposed that the Organization of American States (OAS) Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism be used to evaluate all the countries in the region, their willingness and effective actions in the fight against drugs, including the U.S., the main consumer and basic cause of the drug trafficking problem. The United States accepted and, in fact, the U.S. Congress cancelled certification as a mechanism. For the last two years, cooperation against drug trafficking has been dealt with in the OAS. This achievement is also a consequence of Mexico's policy of seeking to turn around the

The fourth matter —also new— was Bush's desire to build a new relationship with Latin America as a whole, not just with Mexico. Given that its relations with the region had deteriorated in recent years because of Venezuela's Chávez government, Colombia's internal problems and Argentina's already visible economic crisis, the U.S. government, and Bush in particular, asked Fox to arrange ways to get closer to Latin America. With exception of the matter of Cuba, about which a fundamental discrepancy persists between both nations because Mexico opposes the embargo and the Americans are not willing to change that policy, with regard to the rest of the cases, a very close dialogue began between the U.S. and Mexican governments, dealing even with the issue of integration.

Finally, the Fox administration's fifth new issue was its agenda of fundamental reforms to our country's institutional structure (on fiscal, labor, political, energy and all the other issues), of which we still have seen nothing. However, his government is committed to them, which improves the perspectives for bilateral relations from the point of view of the Americans.

However, September 11 happened. Bilateral issues began to lose strength vis-à-vis Bush's main priorities: homeland security and the war against terrorism, which allow for no concessions on migration because it means the entry of a larger number of persons to the United States. They also do not favor the discussions about drug trafficking because terrorism and drug trafficking have sometimes been related. The resolution of trade problems also bogged down because the United States decided to close its borders. The flow of trade was interrupted and relations with Latin America were put on the back burner. The agenda was totally replaced by the war against terrorism, later Afghanistan and then the war in Iraq. In my opinion, and from a non-traditional perspective, the Americans have one major defect: they do not like to deal with two large problems at the same time. They are incapable of it. It is either Iraq or North Korea. It is either Mexico or Afghanistan; or either Afghanistan or the Middle East. But they do not get involved in two or three issues at the same time. In fact, today the issue is once again the Middle East. The day before yesterday it was Iraq; three days before it was North Korea; and, therefore, the Mexico issue has been relegated to the past.

I think that Mexico's feeble response to the events of September 11

also played a role in this. I am one of those who think that the response should have shown more solidarity and been swifter and more visible to Americans. The internal debate about whether we should show solidarity or not, how much and with what kind of actions, finally resulted in President Fox and his administration not being present, in the eyes of U.S. public opinion, as other nations were in supporting the U.S. government and people. This undoubtedly had an important influence in the deterioration of the new positive agenda that was being built. Relations became distant immediately after September 11. The fact that President Fox did not ask for a minute of silence in the Zócalo Plaza on September 16, Mexico's Independence Day, shows it. This, together with a series of other events, led to a relatively significant disappointment in the United States about how Mexico had reacted at a moment when it came under terrorist attack.

Almost at the same time, another position of the Mexican government caused irritation in U.S. circles of power: the denunciation of the Río Treaty, signed by the majority of countries in the Americas. After September 11, the United States sought the support of the international community to relatively minimize the unilateral nature of the response it began to plan by giving it a multilateral character. To that end, it called on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries to comply with Article 5 of the treaty; this article says exactly the same thing as the corresponding article in the Inter-American Mutual Assistance Treaty, which stipulates that an attack against any member country is an attack against all and, therefore, demands a

military response in solidarity from all signatories. They invoked this article in NATO in Brussels and asked a good Latin American friend, Brazil [before Lula] to convoke the Río Treaty in Washington to declare that the attack on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon had been an attack on all members. I will not go into any depth as to why Mexico could not accept this proposal. Suffice it to say that our country had, and continues to have, serious objections to the Río Treaty, often invoked by the United States to legitimize its own interests and its unilateral actions in Panama, the Dominican Republic and other places, which Mexico also

The key to the migratory negotiations was to open up more possibilities for Mexicans to legally enter the United States in exchange for Mexico's cooperation to ensure an ordered, secure border.

opposed. Mexico opposed not only Brazil's invocation of the Río Treaty, but had already denounced it a few days earlier (September 7, during President Fox's state visit to Washington). A regrettable coincidence.

To finish with September 11, I must mention Mexico's action vis-à-vis Iraq. I can only say here that Mexico's role in the UN Security Council was outstanding. I have no doubt that as members of the council, we have to play an appropriate role. The idea is not to fight to be a member and then hide when an uncomfortable issue comes up.

Mexico had to make a decision that put it at loggerheads with the United States, Spain and Great Britain. Its position was perfectly consistent with its foreign policy, which opposes legitimizing the use of force under conditions not foreseen by the UN Charter.

Therefore, it opposed the resolution presented by the United States, which, of course, had a negative impact on our bilateral relations. I believe, however, that with regard to Iraq we made some mistakes. The first was to try to please everyone, domestically and abroad. Internally, the government was very aware that public opinion was overwhelmingly against the war, but at the same time there were sectors—notably from the business community—who thought that it was a priority to accompany the United States in its adventure. The truth is that there was an attempt to “navigate the waters” to please the greatest possible number of contradic-

tory points of view, and I think that this lack of definition was wrongly interpreted by the United States, which thought at one point that Mexico might come up with a different decision than the one it finally made. For the United States, the disappointment was enormous.

The second mistake was that Mexico played a leading role in New York, not only in the Security Council, but also through its ambassador, who, of course together with the ambassadors of the other countries, played a fundamental role in mediating a series of issues that led undoubtedly to the ominous defeat of Spain and the United States in the Security Council. A third mistake was the lack of a clear explanation about Mexico's position. A partial explanation was given in which we declared ourselves opposed to the war, pacifists; this argument was not

valid, above all because this was a much more profound matter that had to be decided on the basis of a discussion in the United Nations, and pacifism was not at that time reasonable or acceptable to anyone. I think that these errors exacerbated the situation and caused Presidents Bush's and Aznar's negative reaction to Mexico's position. At the same time, we should not make this a bigger problem than it is. We were not the only ones to take this stance. Many other countries took similar positions. Our decision put us on the right side. Of that I have no doubt whatsoever. We could never have seconded

Brazilian President Lula da Silva is the new star, the new symbol of change. If today the U.S. has its eye on a continental leader, it is Lula, who has taken the place that once belonged to President Fox, to a great extent because Fox has already been in office three years and is therefore a known entity. In addition, I reiterate that the United States' dialogue with Colombia and even with Cuba and Venezuela are now bilateral.

Our anti-Americanism is and will always be an obstacle to our relations. We cannot escape it. In my view, this is regrettable because it always comes

In the U.S. the perception is that in Mexico, every time a decision has to be made about their action, anti-Americanism blossoms, like in the recent proposal to negotiate an opening in migration in exchange for an opening in oil.

the U.S. proposal. However, all these events have affected bilateral relations, as President Fox himself, Foreign Minister Derbez and President Bush have all said many times.

All of this leads me to the central issue: perspectives for Mexico-U.S. relations. For me, prospects are mixed. On the one hand, I think that, given other priorities, the United States will pay little attention to Mexico and Latin America for the rest of the current administration. The reconstruction of Iraq, the Middle East, the threat of North Korea: all these are the issues that are going to capture their interest.

Another important point regarding prospects for bilateral relations is that the United States today, in contrast with the beginnings of the Bush administration, has its own dialogue with other actors in Latin America and no longer relies on Mexico to facilitate dialogue.

up again just when we think we have overcome it. In the United States, the perception is that in Mexico, every time a decision has to be made about their action, this anti-Americanism blossoms, like in the recent case of the proposal to negotiate an opening in migration in exchange for an opening in oil. Then both nationalism and anti-Americanism come to the fore and everyone rends their clothing and turns into fervent defenders of sovereignty. This is why it has not been possible—and it will not be possible in the short term—for the United States to see us as partners; they continue to consider us neighbors—sometimes at ease with us and other times ill at ease—adversaries in some cases, cohorts in others, but never partners. Like, for example, they do see the British. They do not perceive anti-Americanism in Canada either, except sometimes in the small

region of Quebec. In Mexico, they do see it, and they see it as something that permanently affects bilateral relations. This is one of the reasons that I believe that prospects are not particularly encouraging and will not be at least until there is a qualitative change in the relationship that transcends these feelings. Another factor, of course, is the ideology of the two administrations. The neo-conservative ideology of Bush and his team is incompatible with Mexico's deep-seated nationalism, which dictates that the internal affairs of every country should not be known to other countries; for the Bush Doctrine, meanwhile, intervention is valid in cases urgent and necessary to the international community. With this ideology, they justified their entry into Iraq, their efforts to influence the change in regimen in Cuba, etc., all of which is counterposed to the traditional thesis of Mexico's foreign policy: non-intervention, sovereignty and the peaceful resolution of controversies.

I think that something fundamental is lacking for the long-term improvement of bilateral relations: dialogue with actors in both countries other than officials already involved in each capital. For example, there is no dialogue with the millions of Mexican Americans and Mexicans who live in practically all states of the United States. One way or another, all these states have influence in relations with Mexico, but we always go to Washington without taking into account the fact that in the United States power is very decentralized. We should negotiate with governors; we should influence the local media; we should establish contact with state chambers of commerce; we should take into account local legislatures, etc. And we do not do any of this; we tend

to concentrate our attention on the federal government, which is not necessarily the best way to achieve our aims. Just for example: NAFTA was approved in the U.S. Congress thanks to the work the federal government did with the rest of the political actors, on state and local levels.

I want to conclude with six recommendations about how to manage relations with the United States from now on. First, we should try to reduce the level of nationalist, anti-American rhetoric because it is useless for bilateral relations, particularly because in the United States it has no impact. The nationalist discourse is for domestic consumption and even in Mexico it has lost credibility.

Second, I think that we should concentrate our lobbying efforts a little more outside Washington: we should go to Texas, California, the Midwest. For example, Texas is very important, not only because many Mexicans reside there, but also because the president of the United States is a Texan and, above all, because it is a very important player in U.S. politics with whom there has never been a real exchange. For similar reasons, it is important to strengthen our relationship with California, a state which also has a very important Mexican population and has great influence on the country's political decisions. I think that much more can be done with the governors, particularly those from the South, and not only the president, but also the cabinet, the media and legislators.

Third, we should seek new alliances. We have natural allies in the United States. They are not always sitting in Washington, but can be found in the media, for example, *The New York Times*. Obviously, we also have the Hispanic

community. We have allies among the business communities, which are interested in Mexico succeeding and in their businesses prospering in our country. We have to take advantage of all these alliances; the truth is that neither the public nor the private sector has made the most of them.

Fourth, we have to play a new hand. There are other aces in our deck. I am not going to enter into the debate about our priorities, but we have to play the hand of the post-September-11 period because, in the last analysis, U.S. security does depend to a great extent on its two neighbors. Their territory will never be secure if their borders with Canada and Mexico are not also secure. This is something we should make the most of, for example, to develop border infrastructure, to develop investigations that tell us what is happening along the border so that the border is no longer the misfortune it is in some cities. For example, we should come to agreements about the environment and energy, among other matters of interest to our neighbor in which oil and other natural resources play an important part.

Fifth, with regard to migration, like on other conflictive issues, we should seek partial agreements because, given the current international climate, it is not possible to negotiate "the full enchilada." I myself prepared "the enchilada", together with colleagues in the United States, and we would have liked very much for it to have been the basis for the negotiation, as it was until September 11. But, we have to be realistic: circumstances change. Today, "the full enchilada" is not viable. But, in contrast, there are aspects of "the enchilada" that could be advanced. I will mention only three: broadening

out the regimen of visas for Mexicans by taking Mexico and Canada out of the U.S.'s general migratory arrangement and establishing an agreement for agricultural workers (which was very near completion), as well as allowing the majority of Mexicans who are already in the United States to legalize their presence there. These kinds of accords are feasible and very much to everyone's advantage, even if they are not everything we would have wanted. Each one can make for a smaller number of Mexicans at risk, like those unfortunates who have died trying to cross the border illegally.

Lastly, we should not forget that there are other priorities. Without a doubt, the United States is Mexico's main foreign policy priority, but it is not the only one. We should pay attention to other parts of the world. The first and most important is, of course, Latin America. The current administration began with a public decision to strengthen ties with Latin America, something which has not been achieved above all because we are always immersed in relations with the United States. We have to get closer to the Brazilian government and the new administration in Argentina and set up negotiations with Mercosur and the other nations in Latin America. Of course, Mexico cannot neglect its negotiations with Europe and Asia, which are the other two points on the geo-strategic compass: to the north with Canada and the United States; to the Atlantic with Europe; to the Pacific with Asia; and to the south with Latin America. **MM**

NOTES

¹ This article is a summary of a lecture presented to launch the advanced course "Mexico-U.S. Relations" in the UNAM in 2003.

The Idea of Diversity in Mexico And the United States

José A. Aguilar Rivera*



Lewis W. Hine

Waiting at Ellis Island.

On August 19, 2000, the statue of Abraham Lincoln located in Mexico City's Abraham Lincoln Park was knocked off its pedestal.¹ Across the street, Martin Luther King witnessed the strange disappearance. The almost four-meter-high bronze statue was found lying not far away. The top part had been separated from the rest of the body. Uneasy policemen took the head to a district attorney's office and it was kept there. Later, municipal employees took Lincoln's body to a

warehouse. After a few consultations, the authorities decided that Lincoln's head and body could not be reunited because no one knew who the statue belonged to since it had been a gift from the U.S. government. The assistant ward director for legal affairs stated to the press, "It has not been put back because we don't know who should ask for the head, the federal or the local government."² According to witnesses, a group of young revelers knocked down the statue in the heat of a pre-dawn spree. More than a month later, Lincoln was finally returned to his pedestal. One reporter wrote, "Abraham

Lincoln returned to the corner of Julio Verne and Emilio Castelar completely restored, to represent the American people who donated him to the Mexicans in 1982."³

The entire episode is an almost perfect metaphor for the national condition of our two countries: a past that wavers between the upsets of contingency, a determination to remember—if not to commemorate—a patriotic story under fire, the appropriation of memory fractured by strangers and its often unpredictable migration across national borders. Our past is not our own. It also reveals the fights to adju-

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dicade symbolic property; some solicit the head, others the body of history. Everyone asks whom the nation and its history belongs to. Lincoln's predicament also reminds us that there is a will to reintegrate, to restore what has been broken. Our national identities anxiously look for their lost head. And that search for integrity, like Lincoln's sudden reversal of fortunes in Mexico, is crisscrossed by chance in the extreme. Perhaps, at the end of the day, we will be able to reunite our scattered parts. However, in contrast with Lincoln's effigy, the face of the past has been lost forever. There is no solder or sheen that can restore its original condition.

* * *

The idea of writing about Mexico and the U.S. national experiences came about in the United States in the mid-1990s during the climax of that country's cultural wars.⁴ These conflicts coincided with the 1994 Zapatista rebellion, which evidenced the breakdown of the national imaginary in Mexico. It seemed to me that both countries went through like symbolic upsets and that their predicament had many similarities that were by no means recent. The comparison of these experiences could help Mexicans and Americans understand their circumstances better. This is not, of course, a new road. Other observers have noted that the debates about multiculturalism in the United States have broader implications.⁵ In a speech given in Washington nearly a quarter of a century ago, Octavio Paz surprised his American audience saying, "To conquer its enemies, the United States must first conquer itself: return to its origins, not to repeat them but to rectify them.

The other and the others —the minorities inside, as well as the marginal countries and nations outside— do exist."⁶ Paz was repeating a commonplace: our countries were separated by "very profound social, economic and psychic differences." Mexico and the United States were two different versions of Western civilization. The history of our relations was that of a mutual, persistent and usually —although not always— involuntary deception.

Perhaps Paz was right, although these kinds of civilizing explanations are less and less persuasive. However, here, I am interested in pointing to the commonalities —not the differences— between the Mexican and American national experiences. Both countries are in a simultaneous process of introspection and redefining their identities. In both Mexico and the United States, multiculturalism has become a central issue for public debate. Does the term mean the same thing in both countries? In principle, there would seem to be semantic differences. The word "multiculturalism" is more used in Britain, Canada and the United States, although in Mexico it is beginning to replace the term "cultural pluralism" that was used for a good part of the twentieth century. However, the word "continues to have different applications. Americans use it to designate the separate co-existence of ethnic groups. Despite having preached the cultural mix and consecrating it with the expression 'melting pot,' identities tend to be essentialist and belonging to a community has become the main guarantee of individual rights."⁷ In accordance with this idea, in Latin America, "Modern nations were not formed with the model of belonging to ethnicities or communities because in many

countries large groups of foreign migrants intermingled.

The integration of American and European ethnic groups took place within the French model of the republic, adapting it more or less to Latin American historical processes."⁸ According to García Canclini, in Latin American countries there was

greater social willingness and more of a variety of political-cultural strategies to make it possible for heterogeneity to be resolved with mestization. While in the United States, blacks were first kept as slaves and later segregated in neighborhoods, schools and other public spaces, and the indigenous were marginalized on reservations, in the Latin American countries, the extermination and marginalization of blacks and indigenous co-existed with policies for mestization from the nineteenth century on and with an (unequal) recognition of their citizenship, which went as far as the symbolic exaltation of their patrimony in Mexican *indigenismo*. Racism was everywhere, but the alternatives to racism must be differentiated.... While in the United States mestization and hybridization have predominantly been seen as scandalous, in Latin American and Caribbean countries, together with discriminatory policies and day-to-day attitudes, broad sectors of society put a positive value on mixing as something which fosters modernization and cultural creativity.⁹

[And] although the "American black" and the "Mexican Indian" were the other in the civic normativity in their respective countries, the Indian in Mexico was situated as the very subject of the nationality, a subject who was to be transformed through education and racial mixing.¹⁰

While in Latin America solving multicultural conflicts through affirmative action policies is not very popular, indigenous rights, based on an essentialist conception of identity, are increasingly accepted.

This history, which summarizes the dominant view, must be reviewed because it is unsatisfactory. The comparison between Mexico and the United States illuminates its insufficiencies. For a start, it is inconsistent: if the paradigm of integration in Mexico was the secular idea of the republic, how can we explain the racial ideology of mestization at the center of the discourse about national identity? Far from being a matter of informal understandings, mestization was an out-and-out racialist theory, with theoreticians to systematize it. This is not a minor variation of the French model. The identity axis was the mestizo, not the citizen. Although many of the differences noted are very real, others are a matter of degree. After everything is said and done, in the colonial period, as in many states of the United States, there was also a complex system of racial classification that sought to codify the different possibilities and degrees of mixture. The colonial censors wanted to know who was what and in what proportion to determine the step on the social ladder that he or she should occupy. The nineteenth century, which attempted to eliminate this hateful legacy, was in many respects just a brief interlude in our racist past. A short time later, by the end of the *Porfiriato* (the 30-year dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz), the notion of race was back, and ended up by strengthening itself during the post-revolutionary period. Mestization, which as a social

phenomenon is beneficial since it presumes that there are no unbreachable ethnic or religious barriers to people uniting, is pernicious as a national ideology. In other respects, the emphasis on “the cosmic race” has blacked out important phenomena such as the continued existence of minorities who do not mix in: indigenous, Mennonites, Jews, etc. This has influenced how we think about and analyze processes of integration.

Perhaps the underlying similarities, neither explicit nor recognized, between both societies are what explain the success of the multicultural discourse in broad intellectual and political circles in Mexico.¹¹ And while in Latin America solving multicultural conflicts through affirmative action policies is not very popular, indigenous rights, based on an essentialist conception of identity, are increasingly accepted. Similarly, gender quotas have already made their appearance in Mexican politics. Are we moving in both countries toward a common discourse on multiculturalism?¹²

Multiculturalism is a persuasion, an attempt to lead us to believe in the basic suppositions that support an interpretation of history and culture. In effect, “The export of U.S. multiculturalism has been echoed in Europe and Latin American at a moment in which the decline of the socialist critique of capitalism contributed to devaluing distributive demands.”¹³ García

Canclini, for example, states that the dissemination of the U.S. and Canadian debates in France and other European countries has led to reflect “about the insufficiency of the principle of equal rights and the inability of institutions to really supply equal access to goods and services and avert racism.”¹⁴ In addition, multiculturalism seeks to persuade about the explicit need of symbolic recognition for minorities. The specific forms of this recognition are the subject of lively debate in both countries. The debate turns around several crosscutting themes. For example, writing and re-writing national history, education, the inclusion or the right to difference for minorities and the search for cultural common denominators. How the debates on these issues have evolved in the United States and Mexico is explored in a comparative fashion and divided into three parts.

1) First, there is the debate about national history and its teachings in both countries during the 1990s. In the United States, the concern is that the version of history of that nation does not appropriately reflect the participation of minorities in nation-building efforts. The adjudication of history—who did what, how much and how—has led many specialists to question the role of history and its teaching in a diverse society. Is rewriting the historic narrative in an attempt to incorporate the excluded limited by “objectivity”? The past and its image mold not only our understanding of the present but also future possibilities. In the same way, in Mexico, controversies about the country’s history have been frequent. The writing of official schoolbooks led to a huge polemic in 1992. A group of historians aimed to

demythologize the official history and reinterpret some of the most stereotyped episodes in Mexico history. This attempt was met with numerous objections.

2) At the beginning of the twenty-first century, we only have a few indications to imagine the possible physiognomies of future national identities in Mexico and the United States. In brief, we do not know what comes after the cosmic race and the melting pot. Is the United States really moving toward a “mosaic” composition in the Canadian style? What will unite Mexicans amidst enormous ethnic, regional and economic inequality? This part is an exercise in imagination and memory. Neither Mexico nor the United States is facing for the first time the challenges of the definition of its nationhood. At other times (when independence was won, at the end of the revolution, during the waves of immigration and in the years that saw the rise of the civil rights movement) both countries managed to recreate their identities. The question we want to answer is: What are their possible future forms?

3) Finally, I analyze the existing cultural diversity (or uniformity) in both societies. In Mexico, the idea of a homogeneously mestizo country—an idea long dominant—has fallen into disrepute and now we seek to establish an image of a multicultural nation that recognizes difference. In what I call the “End of the Cosmic Race” I attempt to go beyond the myth of mestization to recognize the different national groups which throughout history have participated in Mexico’s national construction. Underneath the mask of mestizo uniformity, this country has been much more multicultural than has been thought. The imaginary

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of mestization has been a barrier to the recognition of the role played not only by indigenous groups, but also by Jews, Germans, Chinese, Koreans, Mennonites, etc. Many of these groups have enjoyed de facto or legal autonomy to carry on their affairs. As a result, they have managed to maintain themselves to a greater degree. As opposed to the official understanding that proposes a homogeneous nation, I contend that in Mexico there is an important degree of unrecognized cultural diversity. The reality is the inverted image of the myth.

Then I look into the “Myth of Diversity”, a mirror discussion of this. The United States is a culturally uniform country that thinks of itself as diverse, while Mexico is a multicultural country that thinks of itself as uniform. Despite the sound and the fury of the polemics in the United States, the fact is that it is a very homogeneous nation. The rhetoric once again covers up reality. Diversity is examined in light of indicators such as the percentage of the native population who does not speak English, exogamy and the degree of freedom given to religious and ethnic minorities. In order to compare, I analyze the role played in both countries by specific groups, such as Chinese immigrants, the Amish and Mennonites, Mormon colonies and the Jewish communities. I also dig into the most recent demographic information to illustrate long-term cultural patterns in Mexico and the United

States. While the census and other sources describe in great detail the racial composition of U.S. society, in Mexico that information is practically non-existent. This, of course, is not fortuitous. The lack of useful census information to measure ethnic diversity is due to Mexico’s national self-image as a uniformly mestizo country. In recent years, as revolutionary nationalism eroded, the censuses little by little began to register characteristics that had previously been ignored, such as the population’s ethnic self-identification. This is part of a broader process of symbolic change.

I ultimately seek to show many commonalities between the two countries that are not evident. But among all of them, I emphasize one in particular. The societies of Mexico and the United States live in the shadow of historic guilt. The memory of the many injustices committed against Negroes and indigenous people indelibly mark the public debates and policies of both nations. Neither of them has known how to exorcise the specter of guilt. I examine the cultural, social and political effects of guilt. Undoubtedly, a certain kind of regret can turn into an inducement to forge a better society. However, guilt can also be an obstacle to achieving true social justice. A guilty conscience obscures possible remedies in different ways. This is what has happened in Mexico and the United States. Is it possible to exorcise the phantom of guilt?

What are the similarities between the multicultural debates in Mexico and the United States? The answer is by no means obvious because, as I have mentioned, the starting point of each nation is different. The national ideas that seem to have gone out of date are different in each case. However, the complaints and demands for recognition seem to have notable similarities. Are these similarities real or only apparent? The comparison of the two national debates illuminates aspects which are not glaringly obvious in each country. This exercise results in the questioning of comfortable beliefs about ourselves. The comparison directs our attention to unexplored places that take on importance when observed under a new light. The roads of diversity are many: Will Mexicans and Americans take similar routes or will we travel separate roads? What factors can or should influence this decision? This is an open debate.

In July 2001, the U.S. Postal Service put out a stamp showing a self-portrait of Frida Khalo. The slogan used to publicize the stamp was, "Frida Khalo: the first Hispanic woman honored with a postage stamp." When it was unveiled, Postal Service Vice President for Diversity Development, Benjamin P. Ocasio said, "The Frida Kahlo stamp allows us to reach out across communities to let everyone know that this organization has a commitment to diversity that involves both our customers and our employees."¹⁵ Cecilia Alvear, president of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists added, "This stamp, honoring a Mexican artist who has transcended 'la frontera' and has become an icon to Hispanics, feminists and art lovers, will be a further reminder of the continuous cultural contributions of Latinos to the United States."¹⁶ Khalo must

have imagined herself in many ways, but surely not as a "Hispanic." Neither would it have occurred to her that her work could be appropriated collectively to be shown as an "ethnic contribution to the United States."¹⁷ Frida thus became a symbol of inclusion: she stopped being a Mexican artist and was transformed into the representative of a minority. The episode shows up a paradox. Since Mexicans and Americans begin to imagine a shared future, our different pasts begin to coincide in unexpected ways. **MM**

NOTES

¹ Mirtha Hernández, "Desaparece estatua de Lincoln en Polanco," *Reforma* (Mexico City), 22 August 2000.

² Mirtha Hernández, "Llevar a Lincoln al Ministerio Público," *Reforma* (Mexico City), 22 August 2000.

³ Karla Mendoza, "Devuelven a Lincoln a su lugar," *Reforma* (Mexico City), 25 September 2000.

⁴ This article is a shorter version of the preface to the book by the same author titled *El sonido y la furia. Ensayos sobre la persuasión multicultural en México y en Estados Unidos*, to be released by Taurus Editorial at the beginning of next year.

⁵ See, for example, Denis Lacorne, *La crise de l'identité américaine. Du melting-pot au multiculturalism* (Paris: Fayard, 1997).

⁶ Octavio Paz, "Mexico and the United States: positions and counterpositions," Tommie Sue Montgomery, ed., *Mexico Today* (Philadelphia: ISH, 1982), p. 21.

⁷ Néstor García Canclini, "Diccionario de malentendidos," *Letras libres*, vol. 3, no. 28, April 2001, pp. 22-25. "[People] think and act as members of a minority (Afro-American or

Chicano or Puerto Rican) and as such they have the right to affirm the difference in language, in quotas for jobs and services, or to ensure a place in universities or government agencies. This 'affirmative action' has served to correct and compensate institutionalized forms of discrimination that led to chronic inequalities. But through a procedure that makes groups that one belongs to by birth, via the weight of biology and history, predominate over groups of choice and over mixes, that is, over mestization." Néstor García Canclini, *La globalización imaginada* (Mexico City: Paidós, 2000), p. 110.

⁸ Néstor García Canclini, "Diccionario de malentendidos," *Letras libres*, vol. 3, no. 28, April 2001, p. 24.

⁹ Néstor García Canclini, *La globalización imaginada* (Mexico City: Paidós, 2000), p. 113.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 112 and 116.

¹¹ The writings of Canadian political theorist Will Kymlicka were translated very rapidly into Spanish and read by supporters of multiculturalism in Latin America. See Will Kymlicka, *Ciudadanía multicultural: una teoría liberal de los derechos de las minorías* (Barcelona: Paidós, 1996). For a domestic example of the argument, see Luis Villoro, *Estado plural, pluralidad de culturas* (Mexico City: Paidós/UNAM, 1998) and Héctor Díaz-Polanco and Consuelo Sánchez, *México diverso. La lucha por la autonomía* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 2002).

¹² See, for example, Bárbara A. Driscoll and Paz Consuelo Márquez-Padilla, comps., *El color de la tierra. Minorías en México y Estados Unidos* (Mexico City: UNAM, 2002).

¹³ Néstor García Canclini, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

¹⁵ Press release, 21 June 2001, www.usps.com

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Apropos of the Miramax film about Frida Khalo's life with Salma Hayek in the title role, one critic wrote in a Mexico City newspaper, "What would Frida, an anti-Yankee by nature, say if she could see how the entire social and political ideal disappeared into a superficial narrative that cushioned the physical pain and the torment of the soul that accompanied her throughout almost her entire existence and that today turns her into the heroine of just another 'love story'?" Perla Ciuk, "Frida en Disneylandia," *Reforma* (Mexico City), 11 November 2002,



Stories of the Street The Work Of Alex Rubio And Vincent Valdez

Kathy Vargas*

◀ *I Swear I've Seen My Own Reflection*,
Vincent Valdez, 20 x 16 in., 2001
(charcoal on paper).



▶ *Rubio*, Vincent Valdez, 18 x 24 in., 2003 (pastel on paper).



Friendships between artists fill the spaces from a first concept to the final work. The ideas exchanged and the influences passed back and forth feed individual creative efforts. In artistic friendships the excitement of a shared perception multiplies possibilities. The unique view of each is nurtured through sympathetic yet honest responses. Even when style, content and context change, friendships persist. Alex Rubio and Vincent Valdez have been friends for a long time. Though both are still young, their friendship began when they were children, Rubio a street-wise teen and Valdez a child already sensing his path.

“The stories of the street are mine; the Spanish voices laugh.” This line, which begins a song by Leonard Cohen, best describes the work of Alex Rubio. Rubio’s life in art began on the West Side of San Antonio, Texas, in neighborhoods predominantly Mexican American. The city’s housing projects formed the backdrop for his first exercises as a young artist. “I could always draw,” he says, “science fiction and fantasy art.”¹ He was looking at the work of Boris Vallejo and Patrick Woodruff. Theirs was a style popular in the area around Rubio’s home, the Mirasol Housing Project.

At 13 years of age Rubio began working with a tattoo maker. He recalls that the tattoos he carved into skin reflected the need for escapist imagery; something without a basis in reality was wanted. It was Alex who drew the unique designs that would be used as the patterns (*copias*) with which skin would be imprinted. He quickly learned to handle the homemade tattoo machinery and set up in business for himself.

His neighbors lined up to be tattooed, paying in cash and goods: microwave ovens, furniture and jewelry. “At one time I had five bicycles,” he recalls. His mother was proud of his talent. Her son was an artist. With this skill she need not worry that he would ever starve. Fame and fortune were not pri-

* Photographer and writer living in San Antonio. Her work was reviewed in *Voices of Mexico* 64.

Photos courtesy of Alex Rubio and Vincent Valdez.

◀ *Expulsion from the Great City*, Vincent Valdez, 168 x 42 in., 2002 (pastel on paper).

orities for her. She made her living working in a tamale factory; survival was enough.

Rubio expanded his canvas. The walls of the Mirasol Housing Project were a beautiful white he recalls, and very clean; they were the perfect blank slate for graffiti images of dragons and knights in armor. A box spring mattress was used as a ladder to reach the topmost part of the walls; the fantasy became larger and more public. Rubio was admired and protected by his community, so much so that he almost missed the most important opportunity of his life.

The manager of the housing project was preoccupied with the continuous tagging prevalent in the neighborhood and with the inhalant abuse that often accompanied the use of spray paint. He reasoned that if there was professional artwork on the walls the tagging might cease; he invited the artists of Community Cultural Arts, a non-profit group already famous for their murals in the Cassiano housing project, to tackle the Mirasol walls. Scouting for neighborhood youth who might join their painting teams, Community Cultural Arts' lead artist Juan Hernandez spotted Rubio's work and asked where the young artist might be found.

Alex's friends were suspicious, thinking that the men looking for him must be police officers seeking to shut down his homemade tattoo operation. Mexican Americans/Chicanos working as professional artists was not a familiar concept. They hid Alex's identity until the day they saw the Community Cultural Arts group arrive in paint splattered clothes with photos of themselves working on community murals. Finally introduced to Alex, the artists of CCA promised to teach him to paint with brushes, and he agreed to join them. By the age of 16 Rubio was on staff as a CCA designer.

Rubio describes the process for creating each wall as a community collaboration. The team of artists would meet with the Residents' Association of the housing project to select a theme or a subject before the individual artist created the design. The city's expanding needs for mural art resulted



Expulsion from the Great City, Vincent Valdez, ▶
168 x 42 in., 2002 (pastel on paper).

in Rubio taking his first steps outside his own *barrio*. The South Side and East Side of the city wanted art as well, and Rubio took his turn recruiting young artists, continuing the process that had first begun his career. “Before that time I’d never left my neighborhood,” Rubio recalls. “I didn’t need to leave; I had everything I needed in those few blocks.”

During one of those expeditions outside familiar terrain, 17-year-old artist Alex Rubio met 9-year-

a wheat field with jets flying overhead and the words “make food not war.”

Valdez attributes his early shyness to a solitary childhood spent sketching. He preferred that to more boisterous times outdoors with other boys. The work of his great-grandfather, Jose Maria Valdez, a Spanish artist/muralist, formed his early aesthetic. Valdez’s father, a designer of jet engines, brought home art materials for his son, and Vincent



▲ *R Those Bugle Boy Jeans You're Wearing? Hell No Ho U Know They Polo!* Vincent Valdez, 48 x 60 in., 2001 (oil on canvas).

old, aspiring artist Vincent Valdez. Valdez had heard that young artists were needed to paint a mural at the former site of the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center and convinced his parents to allow him to participate. At that time Valdez had completed many drawings but had never painted. Rubio remembers Vincent as a shy, serious child who jumped out of his mother’s minivan clutching his sketchbook. His talent was immediately apparent. He was allowed to create his own wall, which depicted a farmer in

sketched Superman as well as combat scenes influenced by his father’s experiences in Vietnam. When Alex Rubio needed an assistant he convinced Vincent’s mother to allow her son to join the mural crew.

The two young artists worked long hours to complete community murals. Together they created a Vietnam wall mural and an eight-foot painting of the Virgen de Guadalupe for San Fernando Cathedral. Valdez remembers it as his first taste of independence. He was learning the life of an artist.

Rubio would lecture Valdez about artistic responsibility, discipline and the need for constant practice, lessons that have stayed with Valdez throughout his career. Through Rubio, he met other artists and was included in his first gallery show at the Artists Alliance Gallery when he was 11 years old.

Life moved rapidly for both young artists. In 1988 Rubio graduated from high school and tried college, but even with a full tuition scholarship

county's jail arts program. In 1990, at the age of 20, he began working with Grace Olivarri, director of the Bexar County Creative Art Project. He taught inmates the skills necessary to create wall murals inside the jail. He stayed with the program until 1996, working side by side with men who had come from his own social and economic background. "I knew a lot of those guys from home, from Mirasol or the Cassianos," Rubio says. Their



▲ *Por tu culpa*, Alex Rubio, 30 x 40 in., 1998 (mixed media drawing on paper).

from CCA it was financially impossible. He recalls the more than hour-long bus ride to the university, the long art classes that made it next to impossible to hold a job, the books and art supplies he needed but found it impossible to purchase, and the feeling of letting his mother down because he could no longer help her financially.

While Rubio's position at CCA was gradually being phased out due to dwindling arts funding, he freelanced as a muralist and volunteered at the

images related to his work both culturally and thematically; it was an easy relationship. During that time Rubio rented a studio at the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center's Visual Arts Annex, which was only three blocks from the jail; "it was an easy walk to work," Rubio recalls.

Rubio and Valdez lost contact at some point during Rubio's tenure as art instructor to the inmates. Valdez dreamed of having a life in the fine arts; his father preferred a career in commercial



▲ *El torcido*, Alex Rubio, 48 x 36 in., 1996 (oil on canvas).

Thematically their work reflects their individual backgrounds and ages as well as their experiences with the city.

art for his son. Like most parents, he hoped for something that might insure his child a livelihood. Valdez tried to accommodate his father and in the process lost track of Rubio for two years. The two artists met again when high school student Valdez won a contest, which promised to place his design on the wall of his high school. Rubio was the artist designated to work with the winner to help actualize the work. The two went on to complete other projects together and in 1994 they exhibited jointly, with artist Juan Farias, at the Guadalupe Annex Resident's Gallery.

After high school Valdez opted for an art school in Florida that offered him a full scholarship, but he didn't find the curriculum challenging enough for his needs. He transferred to the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), again on a full scholarship, a move he calls the smartest he's ever made. He admits that he sounds like an ad for RISD, but he found the tough, competitive program to be exactly what he needed. "I got positive feedback and negative feedback, and both were important learning experiences." Valdez's first one-person exhibit at the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center's Theater Gallery, which took place the summer before the artist's senior year, sold out on opening night.

Valdez returned to his hometown after receiving his BEA from RISD in 2000. Rubio, in the meantime, had moved into a position as coordinator of the mural program at San Anto Cultural Arts. The two artists immediately began working together on mural projects, including a large portable mural for San Antonio's Greyhound Bus Station. In 2000 Valdez began teaching classes at the Guadalupe, just a few blocks from Alex and San Anto Cultural Arts.

Both artists speak frequently about their love for their students. Valdez loves the diversity of ages and backgrounds he encounters. "The students come from all over town," he states, "and range in age from eight years to adults." Rubio confides that he stopped drinking while teaching at San Anto. "The kids were always there; they were from the neighborhood; I was living in the same neighborhood. I didn't want to set a bad example, so I quit drinking."

Rubio has since left San Anto and now supports himself as a full-time artist, but he still lives in the neighborhood. Valdez confides that he would eventually like to go to graduate school and possibly have a second residence in another city, but will always keep a home base in San Antonio. Both artists see the city as very unique and the people of the city as familia.

Thematically their work reflects their individual backgrounds and ages as well as their experiences with the city. Rubio's work retells his life at Mirasol and with the inmate art program, as well as the family legends that were a part of his youth. *El Torcido*, Rubio explains, "is a piece about one of the inmates." His *Street Preacher* is a rendition of a man he saw preaching on the corner of Commerce and Main streets. *Por Tu Culpa* tells the story of a man who, after an argument with his wife at the Esquire Bar, took up with a streetwalker and blamed his wife for his fall. *Jesus y Chavalon* shows a gang member's pride in his son.

Rubio's drawing, *Drive By*, tells a very personal tale. On Christmas Day, 1986, he was shot while attending a party at the Viramendi Housing Project. "I was standing outside with some friends. A car went by and a guy just opened fire. He wanted to shoot whoever he could. I felt a burning in my chest and I thought a firecracker had hit me. I turned to the guys around me and asked which one had thrown fireworks at me. When I patted my shirt to find the spot where I'd been hit the blood soaked through. I walked all the way home before asking for help; I didn't want to get my friends in trouble." Rubio spent weeks in the hospital, recovering from the gunshot to his chest, which had gone in through the front and come out through his left side, traveling a mere inch from his heart.

La Lechuza is a visual reminder of his mother's constant warnings about supernatural spirits seeking to harm humanity. "My mother would cancel a trip to the grocery store if she thought she heard a *lechuza* in the neighborhood. And once, after a particularly long night, I saw a huge bird in the trees of a park that looked like the *lechuzas* she'd warned me about."



▲ *La lechuza*, Alex Rubio, 96 x 48 in., 2000 (oil on wood panel).

Valdez had to deal with the fact that he was not the Mexican American of his parent's generation. His was the MTV generation.

Vincent Valdez, younger and from a less stressful economic background, takes on the themes of his generation. Away from home in Rhode Island he made work that yearned for his Latino home and connected him with the culture he had left at home. But through this work he also searched for who he might be. His palette became darker, and he began to experiment with technique. He relates that it was an essential step in coming artistically to where he is now.

His later work became more about the people in his personal life. *Yo Soy Blaxican* is a portrait of his brother, whose chosen cultural affiliation includes the influences of African-American music and culture. Valdez relates that when he came home from school at RISD with paintings of skeletons and other cultural icons, his younger brother questioned his aesthetic. The question arose between them, “when you get that box at the bottom of the questionnaires asking what you are,

what do you check off, Hispanic?” The artist was questioning his own identity and partly envying his younger brother’s easy assertion that he chose to be partly Black because of his love for Tupac and rap music.

Valdez had to deal with the fact that he was not the Mexican American of his parent’s generation, and he was too young to have been part of the Chicano Movement. His was the MTV generation rather than the generation of political movements and folklore. His work began to reflect more personal concerns. As early as middle school there was a stigma to not owning Air Jordans and Guess Jeans. His painting *R Those Bugle Boy Jeans You’re Wearing? Hell No Ho U Know They Polo!* deals with the brand name fixation of his generation.

Even in his renditions of cultural myths such as the devil at the dance, portraits and nudes of former girlfriends make their way in to personalize the work. His series of boxers, he tells us, is about

Today both Rubio and Valdez have received accolades from the mainstream community, and both return to their Latino roots for inspiration and renewal.



▲ *Drive by*, Alex Rubio, 30 x 24 in., 1994 (graphite on paper).



▲ *Kill the Pachuco Bastards!* Vincent Valdez, 48 x 72 in., 2000 (oil on canvas).

Valdez and Rubio expand our boundaries with their reality and their mythology; they ask us many more questions about our identities than they answer.

“death, revelation, coming to terms with destinies, coming to terms for the sake of cleansing and being set free through being beaten.” The series is reminiscent of the Simon and Garfunkel song, *The Boxer*: “In the clearing stands a boxer and a fighter by his trade, and he carries a reminder of every glove that laid him down or cut him ‘til he cries out in his anger and his shame, ‘I am leaving; I am leaving,’ but the fighter still remains.” The words apply but the young artist had not heard the song until the series was well under way. He had come to the theme independently, through the influences of his own generation.

Today both Rubio and Valdez have traveled extensively. Both exhibited in “Chicano Visions: American Painters on the Verge.” Both hold places in prominent collections, including that of entertainer Cheech Marin. Rubio will exhibit in Santa Monica next January and was the recipient of an ArtPace residency to London. Valdez will show his boxers at the McNay Museum of Art next year, and

was chosen Artist of the Year by the respected and established San Antonio Art League Museum. Both have received accolades from the mainstream community, and both return to their Latino roots for inspiration and renewal.

The edge of the artwork is always with us. It delineates the territory between our own reality and that of the artist then blurs itself just enough to give us entry. Our presence within the work is outlined by our own experience; we are enlarged by the artist’s knowledge. Valdez and Rubio expand our boundaries with their reality and their mythology. More importantly they ask us many more questions, about our identities—where we come from, what we leave behind, where we are going—than they answer. Their work leaves just enough space for us to continue searching. **MM**

NOTES

¹ All quotes are from interviews with the author in August 2003.



Willie Varela Filmmaker and Videographer

Retha Oliver*

Willie Varela finds beauty in the conflicts and contradictions of life. His images, whether in photography or on video, capture quirkiness in the midst of ordinary scenes and subjects. In three decades as filmmaker and videographer, he has been honored with screenings of his work at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, a mid-career retrospective at the Whitney Museum of Art, two inclusions (in 1993 and 1995) in the Whitney's biennial exhibition and broadcasts of his work on public television throughout the United States. Not bad for a kid from El Paso with no formal training, who bought his first Super 8 camera with money saved from working the census. "I just started taking pictures," says Varela.¹

It was 1971, and Varela was inspired by two major artists then working with Super 8 imagery; musician John Lennon and experimental filmmaker Stan Brakhage. "I thought, if these guys can make home movies, why can't I? I didn't need to be working in commercial film," he says. Nonetheless,

* Writer and editor living in San Antonio, Texas.

"At the time I was very much tempted by Hollywood," says Varela. "Who wouldn't be? There's money, fame, and you get to sleep with beautiful women. But there were very few artists saying anything worth saying there. I asked myself; could I bend my vision to the desire of the market place? And I just couldn't do it."

Stan Brakhage would remain a powerful influence. Varela's latest installation, exhibited earlier this year at University of Texas at El Paso and at the Hudson Showroom at ArtPace, in San Antonio, Texas, acknowledged his debt to Brakhage, who Varela calls "my only real mentor." Varela met Brakhage in the summer of 1973, and a handful of encounters over the years cemented the impact of the older filmmaker. "Over the years I probably spent a total of only 10 days with him, but every day was a day in which I was transformed," says Varela.

Brakhage himself was inspired by Jean Cocteau and Maya Deren, people whose work was poetic and psychologically laden. Varela, too, produces poetic, tempting, and psychologically intriguing work, emphasizing strong images, unlikely juxtapositions.



The proximity to the border and dominance of Latino culture in El Paso assures that Varela's films reflect his complex cultural awareness and identity.

positions, and video clips with powerful, recognizable context. Currently an assistant professor of film studies at University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), Varela is "visually omnivorous," he says. "I devour everything that's in front of me visually, and I have to expel these images somehow. And once you become visually literate you inevitably try to interpret it."

Varela, 53, credits his calling to a coalescence of aesthetic influences that were unique to the time. "The United States was a different place in the '50s and '60s," says Varela. "The tremendous consciousness of race had not yet overtaken society. The middle of the twentieth century was a terrific time. It was the post-war boom, the age of Eisenhower, abstract expressionism and a gradual turn of the center of the art world to New York from Paris." Far from the throb of America's emerging art world, Varela's working class background and public school education was unexpectedly fertile.

Sun drenched, wind-swept El Paso, Texas is about as far from Hollywood and the New York hub of contemporary art as one can get. In the 1960s, it was not the place one might expect to nurture a budding experimental filmmaker. Yet, says Varela, there was a temporary flourishing of cinema art that gave him an opportunity to experience the world's great art films: "If El Paso ever had a golden age of film exhibition, it was between the mid-'60s and the mid-'70s. The Museum of Art and the university ran series of classic and foreign films. They screened great films by Buñuel, Fellini, Antonioni —and they drew huge audiences; the auditoriums were always crowded. Nowadays, you wouldn't draw flies."

"It was," muses Varela, "a dark time for me; four years at a Jesuit high school had left me feeling lost." It was also the Vietnam era, and Varela says, "I felt minorities were being sent to fight for old men." Filmmaking gave him a way to express and

Varela, produces poetic, tempting and psychologically intriguing work, emphasizing strong images, and video clips with powerful, recognizable context.

explore his responses to cultural influences, and his own internal confusion.

Varela studied education at UTEP, then spent several years as a public school teacher before heading for San Francisco, California in 1982. There, in the heart of America's experimental film community, Varela rubbed shoulders with filmmakers Kenneth Anger and Bruce Conner, among others, learning from everyone he came in contact with. Throughout, he worked a day job: "I wore a tie to work: it was weird. At night I was hanging out with Bohemian types." In California, Varela "grew tremendously as a filmmaker and as an artist." Still, El Paso was home, and Varela returned four years later with his young daughter and his then-wife, who wanted to be closer to family. "Perhaps I'm a bit more culture bound than I like to admit," he acknowledges.

By 1991, Varela was burned out on Super 8: "I had worked with the medium for 20 years, and every time I picked up my camera, I already knew what I was going to do. There was no discovery left in it." For Varela, video technology "gave me a new lease on life. I still consider myself to be in transition to video."

In *This Burning World*, his most recent work, Varela retools the video imagery of others and includes his own original shots, delivering compelling footage with enough common cultural touchstones to provide the viewer with reference points to begin to analyze the work. Brakhage often cut incongru-

ous images into each other: in *This Burning World*, Varela achieves a similar effect by employing two video projectors, splitting the screen into a simultaneous feed of both impressions. Varela utilizes news clips and socially recognizable experiences along with landscape shots and mundane footage. While one side cranks out visceral-response images of human cornea surgery, Kennedy's assassination, and the World Trade Center attack, the other projects visuals seemingly captured by a camera held nonchalantly out an automobile window. Varela's video conversations are intensely personal, but the shared imagery of our common cultural history provides a guide to begin to decode the artist's intentions. The result is mesmeric.

The proximity to the border and dominance of Latino culture in El Paso assures that Varela's films and still photos reflect his complex cultural awareness and identity. Yet there is a universality in his work that transcends race and ethnic lines. When Varela was selected recently for inclusion as an artist-in-residence in 1994 at ArtPace, in San Antonio, the decision was made by a European curator, Ute Menta Baver, from Berlin. "It's exciting to think you've managed to attract an international community of interest," Varela says.

San Antonio's ArtPace has established itself as a leading residency program for contemporary artists. It is also closely watched by trendsetters in the art world. While Varela's previous successes



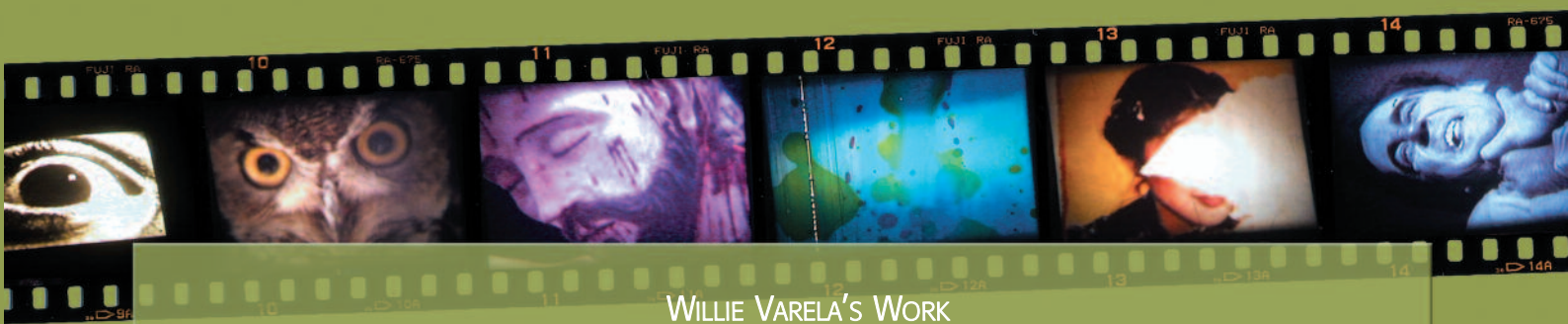
do not need the embellishment of an ArtPace imprimatur, his selection is an impressive validation of a singular career and presents Varela with new opportunities for experimentation. For his upcoming residency, Varela plans to construct unique images that budget and time constraints have not previously allowed: "I want to set up studio shoots, have auditions for young men and women for tableau photography. I want to capture elements of sexuality, modern life, culture and Hispanic influences, mostly Catholic imagery."

Thirty years after Varela started making "home movies," American society has radically transformed. A new Latino middle class and burgeon-

ing Mexican-American population has embraced Latino culture in films and on television and showered success on popular artists like director Roberto Rodriguez and comic George Lopez. Yet Varela, who chose long ago to value art over enterprise, has no regrets: "I'd hate to think what kind of person I would be if I were rich and famous." **MM**

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¹ All quotes are taken from telephone interviews with the author in June and August 2003.



WILLIE VARELA'S WORK

His public exhibition career has spanned over 20 years, with one-man shows at such independent film showcases as the San Francisco Cinematheque, Los Angeles Film Forum, Chicago Filmmakers, Millennium Film Workshop, Rice University, Berks Filmmakers, the Boston Film/Video Foundation, Anthology Film Archives, Collective for Living Cinema, Pacific Film Archives, Austin Film Society, Guadalupe Central Arts Center San Antonio, Donnell Media Center and many others. Highlights of Varela's career include a Cineprobe at the Museum of Modern Art in 1988; videos in the 1993 and 1995 Whitney Biennials; and inclusion of 12 Super 8 films in the *Big As Life: An American History of the 8mm Films*, put on by the Museum of Modern Art, New York. He was also the subject of a mid-career retrospective of his completed work in film and video at the Whitney Museum of American Art in the spring of 1994. This exhibition was organized by Chon Noriega. Varela's films and videotapes have also been shown on broadcast television outlets, including KQED in San Francisco, KUHT in Houston, KDET in Corpus Christi and KWHY in Los Angeles. Photographs and visual/text pieces have also been included in group shows at the Bridge Center for Contemporary Art in El Paso, Texas; the El Paso Museum of Art; the San Antonio Museum of Art; and the Jansen-Perez Gallery in San Antonio, Texas. Varela has also been the recipient of film production grants from the Southwest Independent Production Fund, the Texas Commission on the Arts, the City of El Paso Arts Resources Department and the New Forms Regional Initiatives Grant. Currently, he is an assistant professor of film studies at the University of Texas at El Paso. To find out more, see www.geocities.com/film8

Photos courtesy of Noel López



◀ *Mixtecs Overcoming*, 54 x 27 x 21 cm, 1997 (mahogany and red cedar).

The Motives Behind Noel López's Art

“On the eve of the twenty-first century, graffiti is conceived of as the public art of the new generations who decide to express their problems and social, economic, political and psychological concerns through this medium, that could be described as the expression of contemporary muralism in cities worldwide,” says Noel López, painter, sculptor and engraver, who lives in Mexico City and has dedicated himself to the visual arts for

more than 30 years.¹ “It is a healthy need through which human beings externalize their ideas from time immemorial, expressing them as a problem or as a solution to the problem. If graffiti were studied more carefully, we could find in its expressionism a kind of psychological scream, whose effect is alive in all the world’s societies.”

This is why López says that part of his painting can be classified as graffiti. “It adapts to my needs for expression and returns me to my cul-



▲ *Sunflowers with Mortar and Pestle*, 75 x 110 cm, 1997 (watercolor).



▲ *Mixtec Still Life*, 75 x 112 cm (mixed technique: pastels, charcoal and pencil).

Noel López has dedicated his life to the visual arts, a simple, modest life that he never thought to exchange for any other road than that of artistic expression.

tural roots, in the Mixtec codices, particularly because of their social nature and their color and design.”

Born in Oaxaca in 1947, López has dedicated his life to the visual arts, a simple, modest life that he never thought to exchange for any other road than that of artistic expression. He went to primary school in his native state and then moved to Mexico City, where he finished secondary school and entered the La Esmeralda National School of Painting and Sculpture. A few years later, with a scholarship from the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, he did his post-graduate work in graphic arts in Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia.

“It was in La Esmeralda when my teacher, Roberto Cuétara, began to show me what the Mexican codices meant, that I was inspired as I am until today.” Visually familiarized with them, López began to watercolor codices for the General Office of Museums, where working with them made them even more familiar. Impressed by their colorfulness, he began to do his paintings-graffiti. “I remember that my teacher Aarón Cruz freed me from the fear of the material that grips you when you’re going to begin painting.”

With no vices and with the sobriety to always take a step forward, López has faced his life and

his painting in an “organized, methodical and disciplined [way], because life lasts only as long as a lightning bolt.” But he does not forget the past, when he went through periods of loneliness and anguish: 1968 in Mexico City, the loneliness of unrequited love, confronting dangers, hunger and late nights, “but always with the conviction that I was master of myself, thanks to my grandmother’s advice.”

All these circumstances have given his painting and sculpture form and character, the form that acquires the discipline and fervor to dedicate yourself to an art that does not always receive the recognition it deserves, but has never been replaced by any other, more profitable activity.

Noel López’s sculpture is outstanding for its earnest carving and the links it evokes. “In the first place, my Mixtec ancestors worked wood from the year 1700; they made saddles for horses. Therefore, they always used chisels and whetstones, hatchets and machetes. In the second place, my interest was born, in part, by chance. One day when I visited the National Museum of Anthropology and History, I noticed some carved bones from the Mixtec culture. I gazed on them with such joy that it seemed like I had seen them before. Their



▲ *Homage to Mixtec Teachers*, 159 x 22 x 22 cm, 1987 (red cedar and red mahogany).



▲ Untitled, 30 x 12 x 15 cm, 1990 (red mahogany and cedar).



▲ Pineapple and Cut Paper, 75 x 110 cm, 1997 (watercolor).



▲ Oaxacan Cow, 70 x 55 cm, 1997 (watercolor).

Noel's sculptures refer us to the social struggle, self-improvement and mutual aid in the daily life of Mexico's peoples.

rhythm and chiaroscuro are what I later tried to transfer to my wood carvings. I was also impressed by a stone stela from the Mixtec culture. As a child, when I was six, I found it in the home of a neighbor in my town."

Noel's sculptures refer us to the social struggle, self-improvement and mutual aid in the daily life of Mexico's peoples, the *tequio*,² still deeply rooted in the culture of Oaxaca. He also recognizes the influence of the Mexican School and his teachers from the La Esmeralda school, like José L. Ruiz.

López has had one-man shows and collective exhibitions since 1976, both in Mexico and abroad, and has been given several awards that

testify to his commitment to art. This commitment is even more valuable when we realize that his work has never depended on official patronage or belonged to the select circles of the country's main galleries and exhibition halls. It has survived thanks to the profound conviction that only on that road will he always find reasons for keeping on living. **NMM**

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¹ All quotes of Noel López come from *Voices of Mexico's* September 10, 2003, interview with him.

² *Tequio* is a system of voluntary labor, a tradition in indigenous communities. [Translator's Note.]

Permanent and Temporary Mexican Migrants And the Fox Agenda

Mónica Vereá*



Laura Cano

The late 1990s proposals for a migratory accord between Mexico and the United States, which was being negotiated by both countries' officials, reached an impasse on September 11, 2001. The talks to establish a temporary workers program and to regulate the millions of undocumented immigrants in the United States have barely been reopened, displaced by issues of national security. Since then, the U.S. debate has centered on the need to con-

trol its borders even more, reestablishing a defensive, or "closed door" policy with a myriad of measures to recuperate and strengthen its fragile national security, such as limiting visa emissions, establishing highly technical identification systems, reducing legal immigration, plus many others that have affected not only foreigners but U.S. nationals and residents of all origins.

During the first year and a half of the Fox administration, the president met several times with his counterpart, President George Bush, demonstrating unusual closeness and willingness to arrive at an ambitious migratory accord,

formally proposed in Washington one week before the terrorist attacks. Bush, who from the beginning of his term showed special sensitivity toward Mexico, understood the importance of discussing different aspects of migratory relations and the consequences for both countries. The projected migratory accord included the establishment of a new guest worker program; regularization or amnesty for undocumented immigrants; an increase in temporary worker visas available for Mexico; a border cooperation plan to stem the tide of traffic in migrants; and a private investment program for the development of Mex-

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ican communities, the Partnership for Prosperity. Despite the fact that supposedly the groups of negotiators met on several occasions and that these initiatives were discussed among different U.S. sectors, not only did the negotiations freeze, but the debate changed course.

The controversial resignation of Foreign Minister Jorge Castañeda, who stated his bitter disappointment at not being able to come to a specific accord embodying the advances on migration, was an important precedent. Luis Ernesto Derbez, minister of foreign relations since January 2003, has adopted a distant stance, not as committed as his predecessor. In accordance with the international situation and his professional background, he has promoted matters of trade and put migratory negotiations on the back burner, perhaps because he thinks they have a high political cost and wear down bilateral relations.

Thus, the Mexican government has adopted different positions that sometimes contradict each other. For this reason, it is necessary to review the importance of acceptance mechanisms for immigrants established in U.S. legislation and analyze the role Mexicans have played in the admittance policies for permanent or temporary migrants using the broad category of non-immigrants. This will be of great use for coming up with an ad hoc migratory accord proposal in the short term.

REUNITING MEXICAN FAMILIES

The United States has been consistent in its family reunification policy since about two-thirds of immigrants admitted annually come in under the cate-

gories of family-sponsored preferences and/or immediate family members, while only one-tenth come in under the category of employed persons. That is, in only a limited number of cases has admittance been linked to the need for employment, unlike, for example, the Canadian practice.

About 47 million immigrants were legally admitted to the United States in the twentieth century, 39 percent of whom arrived during the first three decades of the century and 41 percent during the last three. In the 1990s alone, nine million legal immigrants arrived, a figure unsurpassed by any prior decade. In 2001, for example, 1,064,318 immigrants entered the country, of whom 21 percent came in under the category of family-sponsored preference and 41 percent under that of immediate family. Only 16 percent were granted admittance on the basis of their employment, a percentage that has increased in recent years from an average of about 11 percent.

The growing "Asianization" and "Latinization" of certain states of the Union have also become clear in recent decades. Mexico has played a preponderant role in the make-up of the U.S. migrant population. The increased use of the family reunification category by Latinos has created a new demographic map of the United States. Despite the fact that Anglo-Saxons continue to be the vast majority, and Asians make up 13.1 million, Latinos have become the largest ethnic minority, surpassing even the number of Afro-Americans, which today comes to 38.3 million inhabitants. While in 1980, Latinos made up 6.4 percent of the U.S. population, by 2002, they numbered 38.8 million, or 13.5 percent of the population. More than 60

percent of Latinos are of Mexican origin. Estimates put the number of undocumented migrants currently living in the United States at between seven and eight million, of whom only 1.5 million arrived before the 1990s. Approximately slightly over half come from Mexico. Today, 8.2 million American citizens are the children of Mexican parents, and 7.8 million are second-generation Mexicans.

In recent years, the number of migrants to the United States from North America has increased. One of the reasons was the 1980s legalization program established by the IRCA, which made it possible for about three million undocumented migrants to regularize their legal status. During that decade, Mexico contributed 22 percent of the immigrants admitted, and from 1990 to 1995, 42 percent, due to the belated legalization. Their participation has been a constant: for example, in 2001, 38 percent of all immigrants admitted came from the North American region, comprised of Canada, Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean. Mexico contributed almost 20 percent and Canada only 2 percent of all immigrants admitted, which came to a little over a million foreigners, an exceptional figure worldwide.

MEXICAN TEMPORARY WORKERS

Temporary workers come under the category of non-immigrants, the majority of whom enter as temporary visitors for pleasure (tourists) and/or business. The United States is probably the country that receives the most foreigners in the world. For example, in 2001, 29,419,601 foreigners entered the country, but only 592,994 under the differ-

ent categories of temporary workers. 2001 was also a record year for temporary workers hired, without taking into account the 95,000 (92,500 from Canada and only 2,500 from Mexico) who came in under the articles of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). In addition, for obvious reasons, undocumented migrants who are hired daily by U.S. businesses are not included in the number.

It is important to point out that the admission of temporary workers, with or without immigration papers, has been a significant source of wealth that has contributed to maintaining U.S. competitiveness both domestically and internationally and to satisfying the growing demands in the global economy. Thus, in the 1990s, characterized by exceptional sustained economic growth, the demand for foreign labor undoubtedly increased, a fact reflected in a year-by-year rise in the hiring of temporary workers: 139,587 in 1990; 196,760 in 1995; and 592,994 in 2001.

Among all the categories of temporary workers, the one in biggest demand is H-1B or highly skilled workers: 64 percent (384,191) of temporary workers hired in 2001 came under this category. Low-skilled workers have the options of H-2A (agricultural workers) or H-2B (non-agricultural workers). In the same year, both categories came to 15 percent of total entries.

In general, we can say that over the last five years of the 1990s, countries in the North American region obtained an average of 35 percent of all the admissions for temporary workers into the United States; one third of them were for Mexicans, while Canadians made up the majority. Mexicans were granted 77,844 (16 percent) of all the 485,000 H visas issued in 2001. In

The talks to establish a program of temporary workers and to regulate the millions of undocumented immigrants in the United States have barely been reopened.

that same year, the North American region was granted 38 percent of H-1B visas; 84 percent of H-2A visas; and 66 percent of H-2B visas. In general, Canadians benefit more than Mexicans, especially under the terms of H-1B visas for skilled workers, and, of course, under NAFTA regulations, which indicates that Canada is today suffering an important brain drain.

TOWARD A NEW MIGRATORY AGREEMENT

We have seen how the Mexican-origin population has grown substantially and how the entry of Mexicans under both immigrant and non-immigrant categories has increased gradually over recent years. The important economic growth of the U.S. economy during the last decade of the last century is part of the response to this trend. However, the constant demand for cheap, unconditional labor hired through different categories of temporary workers (above all the H2 visas) as well as admittance under the category of family reunification have changed the demographic map of the United States, creating a visible “Mexicanization.”

The September 11 terrorist attacks not only interrupted and even froze the negotiations of the migratory accord, but also created great tension in relations in the North American region in general and between Mexico and the

United States in particular. Bilateral language changed: today, migration is synonymous with security. And, precisely due to this, our collaboration has become indispensable to safeguard borders in order to monitor and possibly stop “undesirable” immigrants who try to cross through Mexico, a country of transit. The proposal of establishing a shared, non-divided border is difficult to attain today.

The attempts to formulate an “emigration policy” by the Mexican government —both non-existent and necessary for many years— have undoubtedly been one of the Fox administration’s achievements. Nevertheless, this policy must be clearly defined with specific objectives, carving out functions for each of the ministers, since currently, many officials intervene, establishing their own agendas, which could lead to a stagnation and overshadowing of specific long-term projects. Vicente Fox’s decision to create the President’s Office for Attention to Mexicans Abroad, replaced in August 2002 by the National Council for Mexican Communities Abroad, presided over by the president with its executive arm in the Institute of Mexicans Abroad, supervised by the Ministry of Foreign Relations, has been a positive one. However, it requires greater institutionalization with an inter-sectoral focus. As long as an inter-ministerial and/or inter-sectoral commission to regulate a well orchestrated emigration

policy with well defined functions and objectives is not established and functioning, the good intentions may well be reduced to mere promises. A change in administrations or foreign ministers —like the change from Jorge Castañeda to Luis Ernesto Derbez— must not lead to a renewed lack of policy, that is the policy of “no policy”. Neither should this vacuum be filled by others, as the ministry of the interior has done, emphasizing national security policy. The lack of cohesion and coordination among the ministries of state has made it possible for different individuals and institutions to intervene to deal with migratory and border issues, but with different agendas. Migration is something that deserves permanent attention and must be institutionalized and permanently formulated to really constitute an “emigration policy.” Therefore, this inter-ministerial commission is urgently needed to avoid silences or the excessive intervention by certain ministers of state.

It is important to reconsider the migratory accord, not necessarily as “the whole enchilada,”¹ but as a possible partial accord by stages. The focus of this migratory proposal might be different in details and language from the original proposal; it might be more discrete, with a larger proportion of national security elements vis-à-vis labor and human rights, in accordance with the new international situation.

A central part of the Fox administration’s emigration policy must be that a mechanism like regularization of undocumented migrants would be consistent with reinforcing both countries’ national security. The creation of a special visa program for Mexico will be needed to achieve ordered, legal

and temporary access, with fair labor standards. If the option is the establishment of a guest workers’ program, it must not tie the “potential bracero” to a single employer, guaranteeing him/her sectoral and regional mobility, as well as offering him/her the possibility of becoming a legal resident after a peremptory period. The principle of *jus domicili*, or the right of residence for obtaining citizenship by virtue of continuous residence in a country, is a very interesting option that should be given thought in our community. The recent proposal by three Arizona legislators to create H1-A and B visas to either regularize undocumented migrants or hire new workers is an initiative that should also be studied.

However, in the long run, a profound transformation must be brought about, a transformation that could aim to turn a mainly bi-national labor market into a regional one. To this end, it will be necessary to recognize that foreign labor, whether of documented or undocumented workers, has been very important for the growth and dynamism of the receiving economies, particularly in certain sectors. In the same way, we must also consider that the best long-term solution to the migratory problem in the region will be balancing the highly pronounced differences in economic levels between Mexico and its neighbors to the north. Greater investment, channeled through specific projects for the creation of lasting jobs in particular communities would undoubtedly help a great deal. The “Society for Progress” project, which would supposedly channel resources into the countryside to stem emigration, is an excellent example. We must ensure that the enormous remittances

(about U.S.\$10 billion a year) sent home by Mexicans abroad are channeled into productive investments and that simply sending them not cost enormous commissions. The establishment of a regional fund of complementary resources and/or a Mexico-U.S. repatriation trust that aimed to return talents and resources to Mexico, would give economic support in the form of loans to both temporary and permanent legal U.S. residents who wanted to return to their places of origin in Mexico and begin productive investment.

I am convinced that it is absolutely necessary to look to the European experience, where workers move about freely. The possibility of establishing a community membership in the region of North America in the European fashion, preserving our national identity, is a goal that we should discuss openly in our society. Finally, turning our temporary migrants into “quasi-citizens” would give them greater security through the acquisition of a considerable number of labor and social rights, even if their political rights were still limited. Freedom of movement in the “Schengenland” fashion must be taken as an example to be followed in the future construction of total or community membership in the region of North America.² **MM**

NOTES

¹ “The whole enchilada” was the phrase former Foreign Minister Jorge Castañeda used to explain that Mexico would seek to achieve all the points on the agenda in negotiating the migratory accord. [Editor’s Note.]

² The author is referring to the European accord that guarantees absolute freedom of movement to European Union workers. [Editors Note.]

Writing/Healing Wounds After 11 September 2001 Cyberspace Testimonios by Latin@s

Claire Joysmith*



My heart is sick, and I know I'm not alone.... I think of the[...] Mayan calendar, the one which sets the time for the shift into the sixth sun of consciousness and justice, which I understand is 2012. I remind myself we were told it would get very bad before it gets any better, we were told that those who refuse to let go of old patterns of destruction would be left behind....My heart hurts because I can't see right now how

we will get from here to there. (Inés Hernández-Ávila, Native American-Chicana, poet, professor.)

Although this might well have been written a couple of months ago, this was actually taken from a *testimonio* written shortly after 11 September 2001,¹ when the tragic events left their mark on history, leaving painful traces in narratives and discourses, in so many hearts, leaving a "heart-hurt" as Chicana writer Sandra Cisneros calls it.

El mundo nos ha cambiado; el mundo ha cambiado. (Liliana Valenzuela, "reverse" Chicana, born in Mexico City, literary translator, poet.)

Two years after this tragedy, and after other recent events such as the war against Iraq, it is imperative not to fall prey to historical amnesia, sink into the dangerous complacency of normalcy. The events of 11 September 2001 brought with them a rupture vis-à-vis existing paradigms, offering an oppor-

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Two years after this tragedy, and after other recent events such as the war against Iraq, it is imperative not to fall prey to historical amnesia, sink into the dangerous complacency of normalcy.

tunity for critical and humanized reflections, and a simultaneous opportunity to heal many wounds. Carolina Valencia, Colombian writer and translator who has lived in the U.S. for 20 years, wrote the following poem:

Después de la provocación y
del penetrante olor a muerte y a polvo
que entró por la ventana, llegaron:
la incertidumbre,
el vacío
la sensación de vulnerabilidad,
la guerra declarada
el ántrax
y una y otra vez
el vacío.

Después de la provocación y
del penetrante olor a muerte y a polvo
que entró por la ventana
cada uno y cada cual
desde su soledad,
enfrenta el mundo como puede.

This “acontecimiento completamente saturado de sentido,” as Gustavo Geirola (Argentine writer and professor at Whittier College) calls it, also provoked fury and hatred, desolation, confusion, and “alcanzó un grado de saturación de ‘realidad’ [tal] que dejó cabida solamente a la ficción hollywoodesca de los eventos” as Hilda Chacón (Cost Rican-Chicana professor) comments.

Ya no es seguro el significado de nada,
ni siquiera de la bandera que tantos in-

migrantes cuelgan en sitios visibles quizá por patriotismo, por solidaridad o por miedo. (Adriana González Mateos, NYU PhD. student at the time, now professor in Mexico.)

The aim of the present text is to gather a collage of perspectives, of deeply-felt, creative and critical expressions surrounding this event and its immediate effects. All the quoted texts have been taken from a collection of polyphonic voices that answered a call for responses via internet shortly after 11 September 2001; the purpose was to document a variety of perspectives with the greatest spontaneity and immediacy possible.

As I see it this country's real battle is with its shadow —its racism, propensity for violence, rapacity for consuming, neglect of its responsibility to global communities and the environment, and unjust treatment of dissenters and disenfranchised, especially people of color....Abre los ojos, North America, open your eyes, look at your shadow, and listen to your soul. (Gloria Anzaldúa, Chicana writer, poet and pioneer theorist.)

These *testimonios* document a wide range of positionalities as part of a cultural, literary, sociological, ethnographic, transcultural and transborder project at the CISAN, UNAM (Claire Joysmith) and at Colorado College in Colorado Springs (Clara Lomas) as

part of a broader Chicana/o-Latina/o-Mexicana/o project.

... cuánto dolor y enojo nos produce ver que los periódicos y la tele nos están escribiendo un guión con el cual no concordamos. No confío en las encuestas que dicen que entre 83 y 94% de los estadounidenses endosan el ataque a Afganistán. (George Yúdice, cultural theorist.)

Over 50 *testimonios* have been selected and compiled into a book edited by the aforementioned scholars and with a prologue by foremost Mexican writer Elena Poniatowska. Entitled *One Wound for Another/Una herida por otra: Testimonios de Latin@s in the U.S. Through Cyberspace (11 de septiembre 2001-11 de marzo 2002)*, it is currently at press, published by CISAN, UNAM, Mexico City.

Chicana-Latina videoartist Catherine Herrera wrote the following:

It has been claimed that the current war will leave no stone unturned, we are either with them or against them. Our world will not survive such polarities. After all, religious wars, cultural wars, racial wars have been fought throughout humanity's history. And still, someone like me, of the blood of the conquered and the conqueror, came into being. Eventually, I hope, we will begin to see our similarities instead of our differences....I called my grandma right away, she lives in San Jose, California. I cried to my grandma, not that she could have taken away the pain but that she was seeing this, that the world she and my grandfather, and those of her generation, had built was now lying wounded on ground zero. She

asked me, “Why do they hate us? Why would anyone hate us?” The answer to that question I knew I could not tell her, although I had a sense of the why.

All the respondents were, in fact, unintentional witnesses of the events through mass media, although they wrote cyber-*testimonios* once they felt prompted to narrate and share their particular experiences during these moments of crisis and communicate these to a faceless cyberspace audience that—given the particulars of the circumstances—seemed to be receptive.

Some respondents identified the unique liminal state in which they found themselves, in this way becoming creative and active participants in what George Yúdice has referred to as the dynamics of a “transformative praxis” inherent to the *testimonio* genre within a post-modern setting.

A momentous event such as that of 9/11 es un arrebataamiento con la fuerza de un hacha. [Carlos] Castaneda’s Don Juan would call such times the day the world stopped. I interpret the world stopping as one in which we experience a radical shift in perception, otra forma de ver. Afterwards we view the world differently—the world as we know it “ends”. This puts us in *nepantla* [a psychological, liminal, space between the way things had been and an unknown future] [and] urges us to respond with creative expression and action; it pushes us into engaging the spirit. It directs us to confront our social sickness with new tools and practices I call spiritual activism and, eventually, to a transformation resulting in the healing of our wounds. (Gloria Anzaldúa)

Participants responded spontaneously to the call for a reply specifically as Latin@s:

As a Latina I believe my angst and self-examination in being multicultural are important experiences that allow me to empathize and relate to the pain and suffering caused by random discrimination. I also believe that, as a U.S. Latina, I have seen both sides of the coin, felt both sides of pain, and perhaps from that hope will arise from the ashes. (Catherine Herrera)

Those participating also responded to the multiple resonances of *testimonio*, a genre of great malleability, a counterdiscursive strategy from the margins, a continual bordercrossing between historical, ethnographic and literary fields, enabling the “subaltern” to “speak”.

I have been reading comic strips and articles on how African Americans and U.S. Latinas/os have taken backseat now as targets of racial hatred to people of Middle Eastern descent living in the U.S. I hear that, and read it, and wonder if that will be a lesson, will teach many of us how racialization is an historical process, to see it in process and resist its rhetoric of division. I am sad that while I saw (and see) people coming together as “Americans,” I did not (and still do not) see enough discussion on race in America... one of the

powerful lessons that we can learn from 9/11. The lesson of whiteness, whiteness—that is—as an historical structure of oppression and category of privilege, is that hierarchies are developed and privilege gained by defining what is “American” against what is “other” ...foreign, wild, not to be trusted, above all to be feared. (Demian Pritchard, literature professor who names herself “a Latina of mixed heritage”.)

One of the main purposes of this project was to gather in one volume several Latin@ voices of both genders, some well-known, others not, implicitly addressing issues of visibility and erasure as well as multivocality within the specificity of an event of global repercussions such as 9/11/01.

Qué triste que ahora sí se nota nuestra presencia por todas partes. Digo triste, porque nos miran con sospecha. Al menos aquellos de nosotros que puedan confundirse con gentes mediterráneas y del Medio Oriente. Y que irónico: resulta que antes queríamos que se nos viera, no ser invisibles, sobresalir. Y ahora a lo mejor queremos volver a nuestra invisibilidad, que no nos noten para que no sospechen, para que no nos confundan.... As the twenty-first century unfolds and the U.S. becomes more and more brown in demographic profile, are we Latinas and Latinos finally going to make a dignified appearance on the public screen? We are there already as singers and

One of the main purposes of this project was to gather in one volume several Latin@ voices of both genders, some well-known, others not, implicitly addressing issues of visibility and erasure as well as multivocality.

This way of documenting and studying multiple identities implicit in these “latinidades” became a unique means of taking a glimpse at what we could call the borderline of a historical moment of rupture.

entertainers, but those are exotic celebrities. Where are we pictured, the Latino/a rank and file, as just regular people who belong anywhere because they are everywhere? (Eliana Rivero, Cuban-Chicana writer and professor.)

People from diverse fields responded: writers, poets, artists, performance artists, students, teachers and professors, architects, government workers, accountants and many others.

My job as an artist is to bear witness, to step back and attempt to see the pattern in these events, and how we can repair el daño. (Gloria Anzaldúa)

* * *

La anécdota cotidiana, en mi opinión, desencadenó un sentido de “comunidad” en este país enorme, donde la gente vive muy aislada la una de la otra. Pero más allá de este sentido de conexión y solidaridad humanas, los profesionales de las universidades y colleges en los E.U. percibimos en esta tragedia también una oportunidad para la reflexión académica. Los estudiantes mismos estaban demandando de nosotros —profesores extranjeros— una explicación válida para entender porque alguien en —otras culturas— puede “odiar tanto” a los E.U. y perpetrar semejante atrocidad. (Hilda Chacón)

* * *

...The first students to express personal agony were my students of color. Coincidence? (Roselyn Costantino, Italian-Mexican-American.)

The call for responses for these *testimonios* was done through cyberspace, a space that, even though it has been appropriated by hegemonic structures, also offers an alternative where resistant transborder discourses may participate and be heard (an example of this would be the Chiapas-based *neo-zapatista* movement). The aim became to document, within the specificity of a post-9/11/01 context, a range of perspectives and positionalities focused on what has recently been termed “latinidades”.²

It is true, many things are now different but many things that we as Latinos/Hispanics hold dear to us, will help all of us as a nation overcome present challenges. With nuestras familias, nuestra fe, y nuestras comunidades, we can work together and strive for peace within each of us, our families, our country, and our world. (George Núñez, Red Cross Rescue team.)

Humor and satire are also given expression:

Given the current atmosphere in the U.S. of overwhelming fear and suspicion....[we] would like to humbly suggest the following performative options: ...In order to avoid misled racist attacks, all Arab-Americans should wear a mariachi hat and a Mexican sarape when going out in public. All Arab-looking Latinos and South Asians should follow suit. (Guillermo Gómez-

Peña and Elaine Katzenberger, performance artist and editor.)

The five main questions sent via internet (focusing on personal and collective reactions vis à vis 9/11/01, changes observed, issues of racism, ethnicity, class and gender linked to the events and associated to self-identification as a Latin@, to globalization, violence, peace, healing processes, and perspectives on Mexico-U.S. border issues), became touchstones for each personal response. These comprised a wide range of creative discursive and literary genres, from the epistolary (or, should we say, cyber-epistolary) to poetry, editorial pieces, post-modern collages and ethnographic-autobiographic writings.

Although our small [editorial] staff spent a good deal of time after September 11 feeling as though our work was somewhat trivial...I now believe exactly the opposite. The need to celebrate the power of the written word, the intellectual freedom we hold dear, and the ability of literature to transport us is stronger than ever. (Kathleen Alcalá, Chicana-Latina writer.)

This way of documenting and studying multiple identities implicit in these “latinidades” became a unique means of taking a glimpse at what we could call a historical moment of rupture, of what could be called a pre- and a post-11 September 2001 discursivity vis-à-vis identity markings and (re)writings.

...We must be highly conscious of how we are implicit/complicit with the matrix of power in which we live. (Amelia María Montes, Chicana.)

Inside/outside, inclusion/exclusion, subjectivity/otherness dichotomies, together with the multiplicity of identity bordercrossings, are visibly reconsidered/reconstructed, acquire greater complexities, are problematized, (re)negotiated and reconfigured in a variety of ways. The binary concepts of “us” vs. “them” were inserted into other problematized spaces, that questioned “us” and U.S. (United States) all within a visible rupture of the “we” of American citizenry, all of which demanded a critical positioning from the “latinidades” in a constant problematizing mode!

We talked about how we felt both included and excluded in what was happening... we had to decide, do we join in and fly the U.S. flag or not. We have been very critical of the way our country discriminates and excludes Raza immigrants and all Latinos, but at the same time as Americans, we had been attacked. As my other comadre put it, our link with the [thousands of] people killed is our flag. It is a strange position to find myself in as a Chicana: pulled in by a sense of belonging to this disaster, yet marginalized as a woman of color in normalcy. (Teresa Carrillo, Chicana professor.)

The American people, that is the general public, will not protest much; they are protecting their way of life. Is their way of life our way of life? (Norma Alarcón, Chicana critic and theorist.)

In several *testimonios* the “we” entails a sense of responsibility:

It is for our collective soul as a nation that I weep. Will we never learn? We who have the power, who have the means to

show the world how to achieve justice without violence. When will we learn to be strong in our goodness and not with our might? (Norma Cantú, Chicana writer and professor.)

In others, a “they” is made the subject:

The disappeared, here and everywhere, past and present, must not be forgotten. Can this country see these other faces? Can they hear these other names? Will they ever understand that history is not just September 11, 2001 and that to know this does not diminish September 11, 2001 in any way? (Inés Hernández-Ávila)

These *testimonios* were sent in English and in Spanish, as well as bilingually and interlingually (that is, using code-switching as a linguistic-cultural marker).

We will never forget.
The day the twin towers
que querían alcanzar el cielo
collapsed like sand castles.

Nunca nos olvidaremos.

The day the sun
se cubrió los ojos
and asked the moon
to embrace a City in pain and grief.

In New York City,
bigger than reality,

la cuna y tumba de tantos soñadores,
who mistook a terrorist attack
por una película de horror
hollywoodense,
the sky was coming down:

It's like a movie!
It's like a nightmare!
It could not happen here!
Where was it supposed to happen?
En una tierra extranjera
miles de millas away
from the American Way of Life?

(Alberto Sandoval-Sánchez, Latino Puer-
torican Spanish language professor.)

Even issues of migration were re-
positioned in interesting ways:

If you look carefully at the ones who jumped desperately in panic to their deaths, they were the ones who had been there for the night shift, working perhaps up to eight hours, cleaning those two buildings. They were still wearing their work clothes. They weren't office workers. I'm sure that the majority of them were janitors. They were lost birds who had at one time crossed the border between the United States and Mexico. But now they were entering the jaws of death, flying without wings, unable to return to the place from where they had come. They could never be migratory birds in this country, only swallows who had flown their final flight. (Javier Campos, Chilean writer living in the U.S.)

It may well be within discursive spaces
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What is lost and recovered, what is forgotten and remembered, why and at what different levels: all this becomes paramount two years after the fall of the Twin Towers.

These *testimonios* also make references to Vietnam, Hiroshima, the Mexico-U.S. border, the 1985 earthquake in Mexico City, the coup in Chile in 1973 and other historical events and tragedies.

The resemblance I am evoking goes well beyond a facile and superficial comparison—for instance—that both in Chile in 1973 and in the States today, terror descended from the sky to destroy the symbols of national identity, the Palace of the Presidents in Santiago, the icons of financial and military power in New York and Washington. No, what I recognize is something deeper, a parallel suffering, a similar pain, a commensurate disorientation echoing what we lived through in Chile as of that September 11. Its most extraordinary incarnation—I still cannot believe what I am witnessing—is that on the screen I see hundreds of relatives wandering the streets of New York, clutching the photos of their sons, fathers, wives, lovers, daughters, begging for information, asking if they are alive or dead, the whole United States forced to look into the abyss of what it means to be *desaparecido*, with no certainty or funeral possible for those beloved men and women who are missing. (Ariel Dorfman, Chilean writer living in the U.S.)

And while some talk of falling bodies and of the fall of the Twin Towers, others observe how discourses followed suit:

Las torres caen al mismo tiempo que se desploma esa capacidad enunciativa triunfalista de los medios de no llamar nunca a las cosas por su nombre o de no referirse nunca al mundo mirándolo desde la otra orilla. (Gustavo Geirola)

We might conclude by saying that it may well be within discursive spaces created by “latinidades” in the U.S. where existing yet often not visible perspectives on post- 9/11/01 are available. Perspectives revealing the capacity to maintain a humanized balance between a feeling life and a political stance, what is ephemeral and what is longer-lasting, what is under erasure and what is recovered, all within polyphonic transborder realities of the “global citizenship” Renato Rosaldo refers to.

It is imperative we see beyond what divides us to what connects us. The survival of the human species depends on each one of us connecting to our “vecinos” (neighbors), whether they live across the street, across national borders or across oceans. A tragedy of this magnitude can prompt us to think not in terms of “my country” or “your country” but “our countries,” “our planet”. (Gloria Anzaldúa)

What is lost and recovered, what is forgotten and remembered, why and at what different levels: all this becomes paramount two years after the

fall of the Twin Towers, now the post-9/11/01 era has settled in with its many surprises and tendency towards complacency, the illusory return to “normalcy”, which these *testimonios* may participate in questioning at a deeper level.

Words are power, and *we* can invoke their power to effect change, to bring about justice with peace....I still hold in my heart the hope that [those] who died have not died in vain and that we can learn the lesson of their sacrifice. (Norma Cantú)

Gloria Anzaldúa mentions that “What we do now counts even more than the frightening event, close call, shock, violation or loss we experienced,” and adds a cryptic message that Clara Lomas and myself, as editors of *One Wound for Another/Una herida por otra: Testimonios de Latin@s in the U.S. (11 de septiembre 2001–11 de marzo 2002)* have found central to our post 9/11/01 work: “May we do work that matters.” **MM**

NOTES

¹ In the introductory piece to *One Wound for Another/Una herida por otra: Testimonios de Latin@s in the U.S. Through Cyberspace (11 de septiembre 2001-11 de marzo de 2002)*, currently at press, published by CISAN, UNAM, Mexico City, Clara Lomas and I refer to the importance of remembering while using the term 9/11 that 11 September, 1973 in Chile was also a tragic date, which is why we use the full date (11 September 2001 or 9/11/01) when referring to the events surrounding the fall of the Twin Towers in New York. [All quotes are from e-mails sent to the aforementioned authors. Editor’s Note.]

² See *Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).

Remittances Covering Household Expenses

Celina Bárcenas*



Laura Cono

Every month, Latino migrants who have left their homes to go work in the United States divide their meager earnings into two parts: one that they use to cover their basic needs and the other that they send home to contribute to the family income, which depends to a great extent on these earnings. These workers, who on an average make about U.S.\$20,000 a year, send between 10 and 20 percent of their wages, that is between U.S.\$200 and U.S.\$400, to their places of origin every month.

Today, the importance of remittances for several Latin American economies

is unquestionable. The real size of the impact these dollars have in receiving countries is clear, despite the different figures that sources give for the totals. The differences arise because the money is sent by several means, in addition to the fact that some Mexican workers labor clandestinely in the U.S., forcing them to send their money in ways that are hard to trace.

A report given in January 2002 during the Second International Monetary Fund Conference on Remittances as an Instrument for Development estimated remittances sent to Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean to be approximately U.S.\$18 billion a year. To get a perspective on this figure, the report points out that it is more than

10 times greater than the U.S.\$1.3 billion in aid that the U.S. budgeted for those same countries in 2003.

The noticeable increase in the number of Latin American immigrants in the United States in recent years translates into an increase in remittances. In 1990, total remittances to the region came to U.S.\$2 billion,¹ while in 2001, estimates put them at U.S.\$18.605 billion distributed over several countries of Central America and the Caribbean.² Table 1 shows data about remittances sent to 10 countries in the region in 2001.

As can be seen in the table, Mexico received the largest amount of remittances, 49.8 percent of the total sent that year. With a sizeable difference in the totals, Mexico is followed by El

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TABLE 1
LATIN AMERICAN REMITTANCES, 2001 (MILLIONS OF DOLLARS)

DESTINATION	REMITTANCES*	% VIS-À-VIS MEXICAN REMITTANCES
Mexico	9,273.7	100.00
El Salvador	1,972.0	21.26
Dominican Republic	1,807.0	19.49
Ecuador	1,400.0	15.10
Jamaica	959.2	10.34
Cuba	930.0	10.03
Colombia	670.0	7.22
Nicaragua	610.0	6.58
Guatemala	584.0	6.30
Honduras	400.0	4.31
TOTAL	18,605.9	

Source: Central banks of each country; Cuba, CEPAL; Colombia, World Bank; Ecuador, *The Economist*, January 2002; Nicaragua, Interamerican Development Bank, 1999 estimate.

Salvador (10.5 percent), the Dominican Republic (9.7 percent) and Ecuador (7.5 percent). We should emphasize that the total of all remittances received by these countries represents only 55.69 percent of the total that Mexico received. It would seem logical to think that these figures correspond to the proportion of each national group in the Hispanic population in the United States. However, this is not the case for all the countries. The Cubans, despite being a larger group than the Hondurans, Salvadorans and Dominicans, send a smaller amount of remittances because in their case, family networks do not always exist.

Graph 1 presents the picture of how the 35,305,818 Hispanic residents of the United States are divided up by nationality. Considering that the immigrants from these 10 countries make

up 25,355,316, or 72 percent,³ of the total of the U.S. Hispanic population, we can confirm that an important percentage of this part of the population maintains economic links with their countries of origin by sending part of their income to their families. It is relevant to point out here that not all Hispanics send money to their countries of origin; it is mainly those who were born outside the U.S. who maintain frequent remittances. For example, of the more than 20 million people of Mexican origin who live in the United States, 42.49 percent were born in Mexico, and are the ones sending remittances.

As can be seen in Table 2, over the last decade there has been a significant increase (90 percent) in the number of homes that receive remittances. Analyses done by Mexico's National

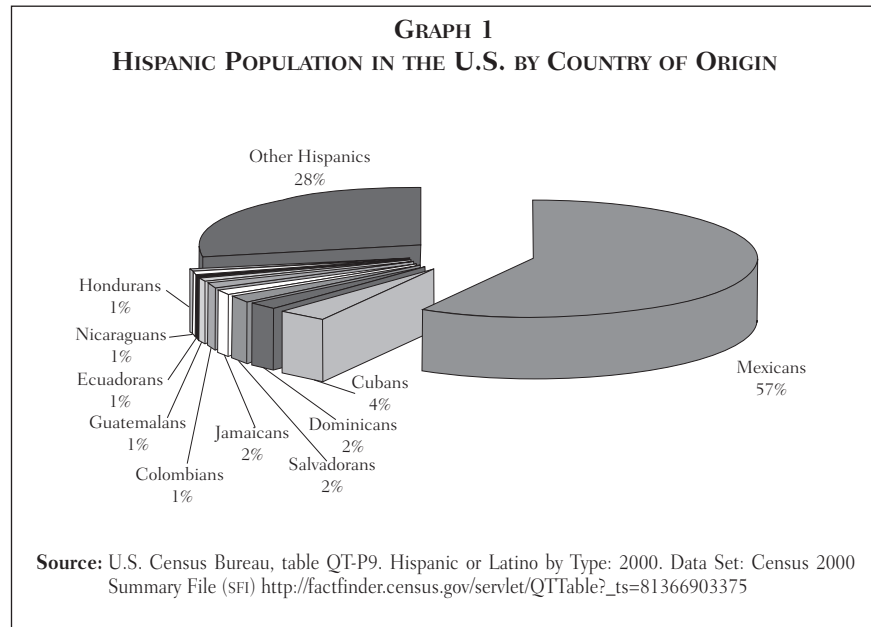
Population Council (Conapo) about the relationship between migration and marginalization in Mexican homes in several municipalities throughout the country offer very interesting results that describe the migratory behavior of municipalities that suffer from high, medium and low marginalization. These results can be seen in Graph 2, showing us the relationship between marginalization and migration in five different degrees. According to these figures, the 15.8 percent of the municipalities with very high levels of marginalization only registered 6.6 percent of very high migration, and, in contrast, municipalities with very low levels of marginalization had a 35.7 percent rate of international migration. While this was happening at the extremes, in the 486 municipalities with medium level marginalization, 69 had very high levels of migration, while 101 had only a high level. This shows that it is not necessarily the poorest who emigrate, but rather those who are not content with their lot and seek better living conditions. The cost of emigration is another factor that has an impact on this pattern.

As I already explained, Mexico is the country which receives the highest remittances in Latin America; their importance is often compared with economic indicators like foreign direct investment and income from tourism or exports, among others. Since 1996, remittances have been sent to one out of every 20 homes on the average and, given that 98 percent of those who emigrate go to the United States, it can be inferred that the money comes from three types of migrants: Mexicans who habitually reside—whether legally or not—in the United States, temporary Mexican migrants who work for part of the year in the United States

but habitually reside in Mexico, and Americans of Mexican origin.⁴

Without a doubt, transfers of money boost the family budget since its main use is to satisfy the basic necessities of more than 1.252 million homes. This income, which represents between 30 percent and 46 percent of the total family income,⁵ is used to pay for food and beverages, clothing and shoes, housing, electricity and fuel, among other items. The second major category of purchases is durable consumer goods and the purchase and improvement of a home; only a small amount is saved or invested productively. Table 3 shows the estimated percentages of total family income used for expenses in different places throughout the country.

According to these figures, we can see the similarities and differences in the distribution of family spending according to the size of the place of residence.



idence. We initially see that food and beverage expenditures in communities of more and fewer than 2,500 inhabitants are approximately the same percentage-wise: 82 percent and 88

percent, respectively. For other items, the differences are clearer, for example: communities of 2,500 and larger spend almost double the amount on goods and services for personal hygiene

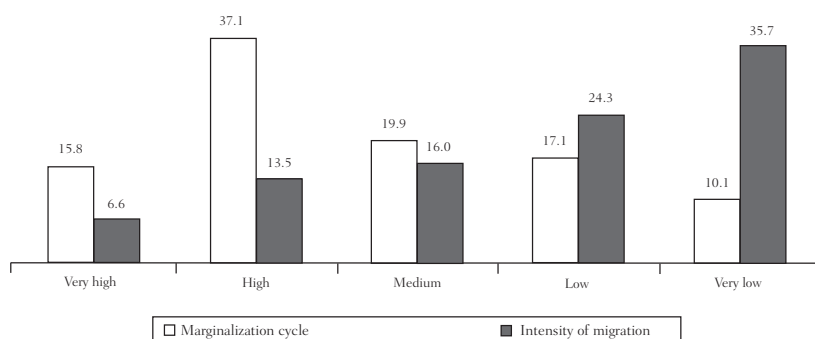
TABLE 2
MEXICAN HOUSEHOLDS WITH INCOME FROM ABROAD (DOLLARS)

	1992	1994	1996	2000
All households	17,819,414	19,440,278	20,465,107	23,484,752
Households with income from abroad	659,673	665,259	1,076,207	1,252,493
Income from abroad*	\$1,393,736,000	\$1,443,734,300	\$2,089,953,300	\$3,759,075,400
In places with 2,500 and more inhabitants	13,464,152	14,721,762	15,535,894	18,101,759
Households with income from abroad	389,109	319,746	584,293	719,865
Total income from abroad*	\$903,958,600	\$778,127,500	\$1,311,717,000	\$2,690,851,400
In places with under 2,500 inhabitants	4,355,262	4,718,516	4,929,213	5,382,993
Households with income from abroad	270,564	345,513	491,914	532,628
Income from abroad*	\$489,777,300	\$665,606,800	\$778,235,900	\$1,068,224,000

* Using the average exchange rate for the following years:
1992 (3.0945), 1994 (3.3752), 1996 (7.5995), 2000 (9.5).

Source: INEGI's *Encuesta Nacional de Ingresos y Gastos de los Hogares*, 1992, 1994, 1996 and 2000.

GRAPH 2
DEGREE OF MUNICIPAL MARGINALIZATION AND MIGRATORY INTENSITY



Source: CONAPO, *Índice de intensidad migratoria México-Estados Unidos 2000*, Mexico, 2002.

ne than families in towns of fewer than 2,500 inhabitants. Inhabitants of larger towns also spend more on shoes and clothing than people who live in smaller places. Also, while for inhabitants of towns of fewer than 2,500 people, the second largest expenditure is for housing, conservation services, electricity and fuel, for inhabitants of larger towns, their second biggest expense is articles and services for cleaning and taking care of the home. In this comparison, the most worrisome difference is undoubtedly medical and health expenses, which in communities of fewer than 2,500 individuals represented barely 0.05 percent of their budget, the lowest item on their list. Larger communities also use

TABLE 3
PERCENT OF INCOME SPENT BY ITEM AND SIZE OF TOWN

EXPENDITURES	NATIONAL TOTAL	2,500 AND MORE INHABITANTS	UNDER 2,500 INHABITANTS
	100.00	100.00	100.00
Food and drink (consumed inside and outside the home, including alcohol and tobacco)	84.34	82.70	87.08
Clothing and shoes	2.03	3.17	0.12
Housing, conservation services, electricity and fuel	2.64	0.84	5.65
Articles and services for house cleaning and care; appliances, furniture, dishware and household utensils	5.93	6.87	4.34
Medical and health care	0.34	0.51	0.05
Transportation; purchase, maintenance and accessories for vehicles and communications	1.16	1.52	0.54
Education and leisure services and articles; tour packages; parties; lodging	0.30	0.40	0.14
Items for personal cleanliness; personal effects; other miscellaneous expenses	3.26	3.98	2.06

Source: INEGI, Encuesta Nacional de Ingresos y Gastos de los Hogares, 1992, 1994, 1996 and 2000. The percentages were calculated based on information from tables 3.7 *Hogares y su ingreso corriente total trimestral por múltiplos de los salarios mínimos generales según tamaño de localidad* and 5.1 *Hogares por la composición de los grandes rubros del gasto corriente total trimestral según tamaño de la localidad*.

a very small part of their budget for this item, although more than in smaller towns.

Regardless of how spectacular the figures are, we must be aware that the tendency to maintain migratory flows from Latin America to the United States, in addition to the difficult economic situation in the region, indicates that remittances will continue to be an important source of income for receiving countries. As long as their inhabitants' needs are not satisfied by their respective governments, migration will be their only option. In the case of Mexico, migratory trends have broadened out to different states and regions, not only traditional sending states, and if migratory flows continue to grow as they have

in the last decade, the amount and number of remittances will also grow. That is why it is necessary to implement plans that promote the use of remittances in the development of productive projects that will support the regional economy. If local development of remittances is stimulated, savings and investment can also be channeled into social services, education and health as priorities, with a positive impact on the population's quality of life. **MM**

NOTES

¹ Douglas S. Massey and Emilio Parrado, *Migra-dollars: The Remittances and Savings of Mexican Migrants to the United States* (Chicago: Popula-

tion Research Center, University of Chicago, 1993).

² Inter-American Development Bank, *Attracting remittances: Market, money and reduced costs*, report read at the Second Conference of the International Monetary Fund on Remittances as an Instrument of Development, Washington, D.C., January 2002.

³ U.S. Census Bureau, table "QT-P9. Hispanic or Latino by Type: 2000" Data Set: Census 2000 Summary File (SF1); http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTable?_ts=81366903375.

⁴ Consejo Nacional de Población, "Las remesas enviadas a México por los trabajadores migrantes en Estados Unidos," *La situación demográfica de México* (Mexico City: Conapo, 1999).

⁵ The relative weight of remittances in household income according to the size of their location and their total quarterly income is as follows: in places with fewer than 2,500 inhabitants, 46.42 percent; in places with more than 2,500 inhabitants, 32.64 percent; the national average is 30.58 percent.



QUINTA BIENAL INTERNACIONAL DE RADIO

Del 17 al 21 de mayo de 2004, México



Bases del Concurso

Inscripción

- Podrán ser inscritas las producciones radiofónicas que hayan sido realizadas después del 1 de abril de 2002, conforme con las siguientes categorías:
 - Radioreportaje
 - Riodrama (programas unitarios)
 - Radiorevista
 - Programas infantiles
 - Radio indigenista
 - Radioarte
 - Programas musicales
 Asimismo podrán participar, fuera de concurso:
 - Promocionales de identificación de las emisoras
 - Campañas institucionales
- Por cada producción que se desee inscribir, deberá ser entregado o enviado un sobre que contenga lo siguiente:
 - Ficha de inscripción debidamente llenada a máquina o por computadora con el fin de incluir correctamente los datos en el catálogo de participantes.
 - Cuatro copias del programa en disco compacto.
 - Comprobante original de pago de la inscripción.
 - Para los programas cuyo idioma no sea el español, una copia del guion original y tres copias del guion traducido al español.
- El sobre, las copias de los programas y los estuches de éstos deberán contener los siguientes datos en una etiqueta impresa a máquina de escribir o por computadora:
 - Título del programa
 - Categoría en la que se inscribe
 - Duración del programa
 - País de origen

- Nombre del responsable, a quien en su caso se entregará el premio o reconocimiento, según corresponda
 - Teléfono del responsable, incluyendo las claves de larga distancia internacional y regional
 - Correo electrónico del responsable
- El costo de la inscripción por programa es de 400 pesos mexicanos para producciones de hasta 30 minutos de duración, y de 500 pesos mexicanos para las obras de más de 30 minutos. El pago por concepto de inscripción deberá hacerse mediante:
 - Depósito u orden de pago a nombre de **Quinta Bienal Internacional de Radio**
 - Tarjeta de crédito a través de la página **www.bienalderadio.com**
 - El cierre de inscripciones es el 5 de marzo de 2004, a las 17:00 horas. El sobre deberá ser enviado o entregado en:

Radio Educación
Ángel Urza 622, Col. Del Valle, C.P. 03100, México, D. F.
 - Por razones aduanales, cada uno de los discos compactos provenientes del extranjero deberá ser declarado con el valor de un dólar al momento de ser empacado para su envío a través del servicio de mensajería especializada (DHL, UPS, FedEx, etcétera). Los gastos por envío, así como los seguros e impuestos, deberán ser cubiertos por el responsable.
- Premiación**
- Se otorgarán los siguientes premios a los ganadores de cada una de las siete categorías del concurso en pesos mexicanos, o en dólares americanos al tipo de cambio vigente al momento de hacer la transacción

Primer lugar: 25,000 pesos
Segundo lugar: 20,000 pesos
Tercer lugar: 15,000 pesos

 Los gastos por concepto de transferencias bancarias para el pago

de los premios serán por cuenta de los beneficiarios.

- Los ganadores serán dados a conocer el viernes 21 de mayo de 2004 durante la ceremonia de premiación y clausura de la Quinta Bienal Internacional de Radio, la cual tendrá lugar en el Centro Nacional de las Artes.

Jurado

- El jurado quedará integrado por destacados especialistas. Su fallo será inapelable.
- El jurado se reserva el derecho de declarar desierto cualquiera de los premios establecidos.

Considerandos

- La Bienal no es responsable por las condiciones en las que sean recibidos los materiales; tampoco si existen problemas en la reproducción de los programas.
- Cada programa presentado sólo podrá ser inscrito en una categoría.
- Las producciones enviadas a concurso no deberán incluir anuncios publicitarios.
- Radio Educación conservará una copia de los programas para su uso como materiales de promoción y difusión. Los autores de las obras premiadas autorizan a Radio Educación la reproducción, distribución y difusión de sus obras.
- Las copias de los programas que no resulten ganadores estarán a disposición de sus responsables hasta el 4 de junio de 2004.
- Los programas concursantes que no cumplan con alguno de los puntos descritos en esta convocatoria serán descalificados. En tal caso, no se devolverá el importe de la inscripción.
- Cualquier caso no previsto en esta convocatoria será resuelto por los organizadores.
- La inscripción a este Concurso implica la aceptación de todas las bases descritas anteriormente.



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“Hispanic” Origins, Use and Meaning Of the Term

Sergio E. Casanueva R.*
Stephen C. Wetlesen, J. D.**

In common English language usage, both verbal and written, most notably in the United States and especially in official publications and communications of governmental bodies, the word “Hispanic” has been in favor, at least since the 1960s, to designate people, groups, organizations, entities, places, cultures and things pertaining to or having origins in the Iberian Peninsula of Europe or anywhere in Latin America. This definition would include and encompass, but not be limited to, people or ethnic groups living in the United States who are immigrants or descended from immigrants from Mexico, Central America, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Peru, Chile, Argentina and other Spanish speaking nations of the Western Hemisphere. It would also include the descendants of indigenous Spanish-speaking peoples who populated what are now the states of California and New Mexico and other Southwestern states, that had lived in those regions long before the United States acquired them in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo at the end of its war with Mexico in 1847-1848. It should be noted that many people in the



“Chisme Killz”, Vincent Valdez, 2001.

United States who speak English as their first or even only language nonetheless consider themselves “Hispanic” because of their ancestry and cultural origins.

It is interesting that “Hispanic” appears to be used in English-speaking countries and societies exclusively. Similarly, people in English-speaking nations do not use “Anglo” as an adjective or descriptive qualifier, except when a contrast and comparison to the Spanish-speaking or cultural world is necessary in the context of a communication or conversation. The only exception to this rule comes when, as shall be seen, persons in Latin American nations, communicating in English for the benefit of an Anglophone audience, refer to artistic artifacts or other matter predating Columbus as “pre-Hispanic.”

Today, “Hispanic” also appears, at least on the surface, to be largely synonymous with the terms “Latino” or “Latina” (masculine and feminine derivations, respectively), which seem to include and encompass the same people, groups, cultures, places and things. However, it must also be observed that it would appear somewhat awkward, for example, to refer to a work of architecture as “Latino,” especially in view of the fact that English uses no gender and that therefore such a term would appear dangerously sexist to American and other Anglophone feminist ears. Therefore, “Hispanic,” being neutral in such sensitive issues as gender equality, would seem to be the most effective term for these purposes.¹

However, it has recently been suggested by some that the term “Hispan-

* Mexican international analyst.

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ic,” while acceptable on the surface, may, intentionally or unintentionally, have some subtle, hidden or deep meanings, nuances or connotations that are in fact or tend to be negative or derogatory. This idea needs to be considered and, if true, suggestions for corrective measures examined.

The *Oxford English Dictionary*, Second Edition² contains two definitions of “Hispanic.” The first, derived from “Hispania,” in the context of an adjective, reads “Pertaining to Spain or its people, especially pertaining to ancient Spain.” Oxford lists several derivations, such as one in 1584 by an R. Scot “Confession compulsorie as by Hispanicall inquisition” and in 1632 one Lithgow mentioned “this Hispanicall proverbe.” This definition of “Hispanic” leads to a few derivations, notably “Hispanicize,” meaning “to render Spanish.” The second, more modern, definition states a “Hispanic” to be “a Spanish-speaking person, especially one of Latin-American descent, living in the U.S.”³ Derivations for this definition in the *Oxford English Dictionary* commence in 1972, where the *New York Times Magazine*⁴ stated:

The fictional melting pot has become a pousse-café in which every layer is jealous of, or hostile to, every other layer; in a fever of ethnicism, Italians, Jews, Orientals, Hispanics and others have withdrawn into themselves.⁵

This second definition on the part of Oxford appears only in the second (1989) edition of its dictionary, not in the original first edition⁶ and not in the 1976 *Supplement to the First Edition*, though the supplement does add “Hispano-American.”⁷ In the first edition, only the original definition as “per-

taining to Spain” was observed, the second edition’s second definition as to a “Spanish-speaking person living in the United States” being an apparent afterthought on the part of Oxford.⁸

To draw an analogy, people residing in the United States, Canada and other English-speaking nations outside the United Kingdom (and no doubt in the modern largely English-speaking Republic of Ireland!) would not at all enjoy having their societies and cultures referred to as “British,” certainly not in the United States on Independence Day, the Fourth of July!

Patriotic Americans recalling the struggles and sacrifices of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Hancock, Patrick Henry (“Give me liberty or give me death!”) and the other founding fathers in the long, hard war of the American Revolution against British imperial colonialism cannot help but be sympathetic to Latin American heroes like Father Hidalgo in Mexico and Simón Bolívar in South America in their similar battles to free their lands from centuries of oppression by Spain. Yet both the original and deep meanings of the term “Hispanic” treat people in the Western Hemisphere as though the Spanish rule had never been thrown off, as though their noble and valiant—and successful— fights for freedom did not really matter. In its deepest connotation then, the term “Hispanic” implies a slur and affront to the patriotism and national pride, dignity and sovereignty of nations like Mexico and many of its regional neighbors.

Moreover, the term “Hispanic” seems to exclude the very essences, cores, fibers, beings and souls of Mexico and other Spanish-speaking nations. For example, an English-language internet

website for the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) refers to a section of art works in a Mexican museum under the heading of “Prehispanic Art.” Similarly, an English language travel website for the Dominican Republic encourages U.S., Canadian and other Anglophone visitors to tour a “Prehispanic Museum.” Such peoples as the Aztec, Maya, Inca and their modern descendants, therefore, are absolutely conspicuous in their absence as not being considered truly “Hispanic.” Thus the term “Hispanic” serves to cut off the culture and heritage of much, if not the majority of the people of Mexico and other Western Hemisphere nations, who are largely descended from indigenous ethnic groups who existed in the New World prior to the arrival of Christopher Columbus. With the term “Hispanic,” much of a Mexican or other Latin American is missing, as though someone, as in Shakespeare’s play, tried to cut out his or her heart but not the blood.⁹ To extend this analogy, many Americans would no doubt feel most deeply offended were the dominant culture, in referring to itself as “British,” to subtly ignore by implication the huge contributions to America by persons of, for just a few examples, German, Irish, Creole, Cajun, Jewish, Italian, Scottish, Portuguese, Russian and other Eastern European or Scandinavian descent.

Finally, it is interesting to note that “Hispanic” tends to be used, as noted above, to designate an American of Latin descent, leading to the suspicion that some may subconsciously—or quite consciously— utilize the term to assimilate people of Latin heritage into Anglo America, deprive them of or at least water down their culture and begin to make them “gringos,” though

there is no real direct evidence for such a supposition. However, utmost vigilance is called for, since much racial discrimination—and condescension—is kept silent, unspoken and not documented: “Everyone knows it and no one has to say a thing,” is a common attitude among some of the less progressive segments of U.S. society.

Moreover, as a brief aside, the use of “Hispanic” as a qualifying adjective, as in, for example, “she is a Hispanic American,” is highly suspect. It is self-evident that such descriptives (like “Italian American” and “Jewish American”) simply function as diminutives.

“Hispanic” is a term of deep, intense and distinct pride
in the independence, equality, self-respect, sovereignty
and dignity of all Spanish-speaking nations.

Very seldom does one hear Americans of the dominant culture refers to themselves as “Anglo-Americans,” “European Americans” or even “white Americans” except perhaps in conversations with or concerning people of other groups. Whatever the ultimate status of the term “Hispanic”, its use as a descriptive is to be generally rejected as condescending and patronizing and to be avoided as much as possible.

In addition, as a second passing aside, there appears to a casual observer an air of unwanted governmental bureaucracy in much of United States usage of the term “Hispanic,” as though its major purpose were classification by politicians and agencies of various constituencies and groups on paper. It is very tempting, then, to simply call for the rejection and suppression of the term “Hispanic” altogether.

However, it is very clear that people of Latin American descent in the

United States and people in Latin America itself think of themselves as “Hispanic” and do not feel offended or insulted by the term. For example, the United States abounds with names like the “National Hispanic University” in San Jose, California and “The Hispanic Yellow Pages” virtually nationwide. A recent Yahoo! search of the internet yielded 619 websites using the term, in their own words, “Hispanic art”; the majority were in the United States referring to enterprises operated by persons of Latin American descent, but some were in Mexico. A similar search for the term “prehispanic” yielded 978

websites in both the U.S. and Latin America. As in the case with UNAM cited above, people of Latin extraction in both the U.S. and in the Spanish-speaking nations are not troubled by being referred to and referring to and thinking of themselves as “Hispanic.” Why, then, should a proclamation be made now to so trouble them?

Furthermore, the difficulties of the substituted use of terms like “Latino” have already been mentioned, while “Latin American” might diminish the cultural heritage of the Spanish speaking Western Hemisphere even further, as with, for example, the notorious statement and gaffe of former U.S. Vice President Dan Quayle who, having returned from a tour of Latin America, stated his profound regret he could not converse with the people of that geographical region of the world because he had not learned to speak Latin in school.¹⁰ Least preferable of

all would be the option of returning to calling people in Spanish-speaking cultures of the Western Hemisphere “Spanish,” thus driving home the unwanted air of Spanish cultural colonialism that has already been mentioned.

Finally, there has been considerable rebellion, rightly or wrongly, in much of U.S. society against the perceived phenomenon of “political correctness” wherein people feel compelled to adopt word and term constructions felt to be awkward, constricting and unnatural while being forbidden to use other, seemingly quite comfortable terms, in order to avoid running the risk of possibly offending some constituency or other. There is no reason to foster, contribute or further fan the unwanted flames of such resentment.

Languages, and the attendant meanings of words and terms within them, are in a constant state of flux and change, as any linguist will readily attest. Anyone in the English-speaking world, by way of analogy and example, who has even the slightest familiarity with the works of Shakespeare can cite a myriad of words and terms whose meanings have utterly changed since the time of Elizabeth I, some becoming more negative, some much more positive in connotation and others neither negative nor positive but simply very different.

What must happen, therefore, is a guided and directed evolution and change in the meaning of the word and term “Hispanic,” an act and work of “linguistic (or semantic) engineering” as it were.

It is strongly recommended that institutions like the UNAM and the great universities of Latin America, as well as scholars in the United States and elsewhere, collaborate intensely to find a new, enhanced but not utterly alien

meaning for the word and term “Hispanic,” and then communicate this amplified, clarified meaning to authorities like the *Oxford English Dictionary* for ongoing revised supplements and future full editions.

The change will not occur all at once, but as a new meaning for the word and term “Hispanic” is officially stated and promulgated throughout the world, especially the United States, and the new meaning is slowly superimposed over the old one without entirely subverting or undermining it, a new consciousness and positive attitude on the part of the English-speaking world toward Spanish-speaking nations, cultures and societies will gradually arise and emerge, for the benefit of all. Such a revised and modified meaning, then, for “Hispanic”¹¹ might include, but certainly by no means be limited to the following:

“Hispanic” means and refers to persons, peoples, places, things, cultures, heritages and societies that are or have been in history touched upon or affected by the Spanish language, but which in turn have strongly influenced the course and evolution of that language and matters related to it. “Hispanic”

refers equally and without any preference or superiority to both Spain and to Spanish-speaking nations, regions and communities of the Western Hemisphere, as well as to the descendants of indigenous pre-Columbian peoples of North, South and Central America and the Caribbean who came to live in contact with and sometimes to blend with Spanish-speaking people, though this definition is in no way intended to diminish or subtract from the indigenous cultures of these ethnic groups. “Hispanic” also includes people in the United States of America and other predominantly English-speaking nations who are immigrants or descended from or choose to identify with, in whole or in part, originally Spanish-speaking nations, peoples or cultures, regardless of whether these people themselves are Spanish- or English-speaking, bilingual or other. “Hispanic” also includes immigrants or their descendants from many regions of the world, notably but not exclusively Europe, Africa or Asia, who now live in predominantly Spanish-speaking nations or regions (for example, people of German or Italian ancestry in Argentina or descendants of

Japanese immigrants in Peru) who are part and parcel of and contribute to these societies. No implication of cultural domination or superiority, residual colonialism or paternalism on the part of Spain or any other nation or region nor the direct descendants of the same is intended within any portion of this definition.

“Hispanic” is a term of deep, intense and distinct pride in the independence, equality, self-respect, sovereignty and dignity all Spanish-speaking nations, regions, societies and cultures, including their descendants, whatever their present language and wherever these nations, regions, cultures or societies may be presently located.

“Hispanic,” finally, is a term of greatness, largeness of soul and of soaring achievements, notably but not exclusively in the arts, culture, music, architecture, literature, exploration, technology, scholarship, education, science, faith, philosophy and political progress that are all, in many ways, among the gems of the entire world.

The meaning of “Hispanic” is, to conclude, dynamic, ever expanding, ever growing in height, depth, complexity, subtlety and beauty. **MM**

NOTES

¹ The term “Chicano” (feminine “Chicana”), once in vogue in the 1960s and 1970s, has similar problems of gender sensitivity and, in any event, has fallen out of favor and usage, probably because it has limited reference to residents of the United States of Mexican origin or descent, tending therefore subtly and tacitly to slight people of other Latino heritages or backgrounds.

² *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 255-256.

³ As noted above, a great many English speaking, or bilingual Americans consider themselves “Hispanic” and would take exception with any definition that limits the term to Spanish-speaking people exclusively.

⁴ *New York Times Magazine* 24 September 1968, cited in *Oxford English Dictionary*.

⁵ With a remark of this nature as Oxford’s first cited example of this new definition of the term “Hispanic,” it does indeed appear somewhat

suspect as a term with negative connotations. However, other cited derivation examples used by Oxford, such as a 1976 discussion on U.S. population statistics, appear more neutral in tone.

⁶ *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1933, reprinted 1961).

⁷ *Oxford English Dictionary, Supplement to the First Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 105.

⁸ English speaking Americans of Latin descent—two notable examples are the master science fiction fantasy writer Philip Jose Farmer (who writes in English) and Victor Rodríguez, commentator at the Public Broadcasting System—however, might well be troubled by the implication that the secondary definition of “Hispanic” is limited to a “Spanish (not English)-speaking person living in the United States,” thus excluding a great many English-speaking Americans of Spanish or Latin American descent.

⁹ See *The Merchant of Venice*. The writer most sincerely and humbly apologizes to readers for the unfortunate anti-Semitic tone of this comedy, but notes that the world of literary scholarship still reluctantly accepts it as a classic and deems it an appropriate work for continued performances worldwide, and therefore feels it may safely be cited here to raise a parable regarding universal principles. With the greatest respect to those of any and all backgrounds, absolutely no insensitivity whatever toward anyone is intended or implied.

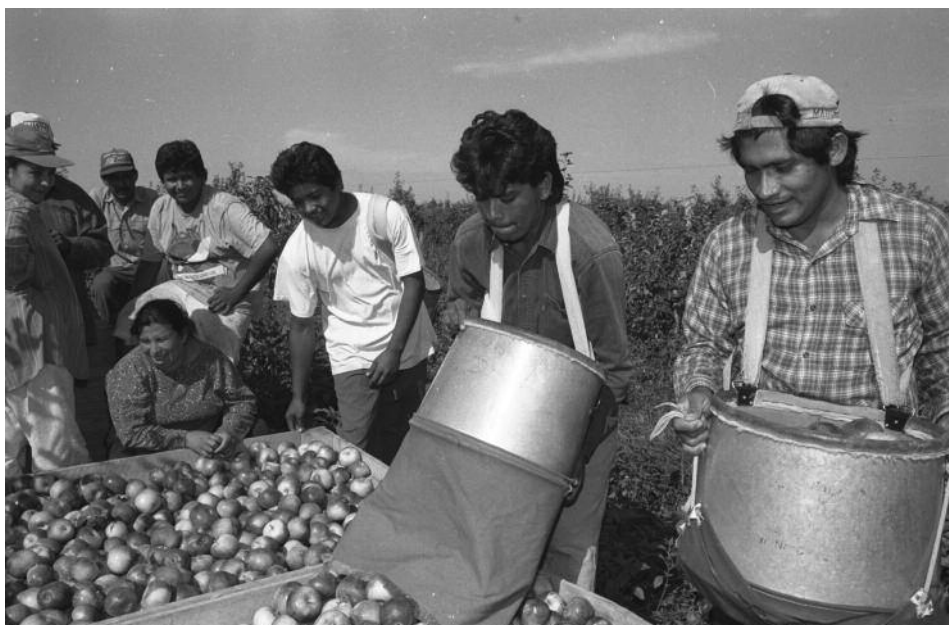
¹⁰ <http://www.funnymail.com>, 21 May 1998.

¹¹ Yet with such a broad, open definition, the question must arise whether the United States of America itself, though predominantly an English-speaking nation, ought to be, in light of all its history, cultural ties and connections with the Spanish speaking world, designated a “Hispanic” country. Perhaps only time will tell.

A Door to Canada

Mexican Temporary Workers

Rosa María Vanegas García*



Laura Cano

Migration is an economic phenomenon undoubtedly linked to the political, social and religious spheres. However, many factors make up the current complex migratory system, among them wars, over-population, famine, natural disasters, climate, joblessness, shrinking wages in countries of origin and the growth of poverty. In Mexico, about 26 million people live in abject poverty or below the poverty line according to National Population Council estimates. This is the case of Mexican farm workers. Officials put

estimates of poor migrant farm workers at about 3.4 million. The deterioration of the peasant economy has led to acute impoverishment among rural families, and it is precisely poverty and the search for ways out, non-existent in their places of origin, that lead millions of farm workers into exodus. For increasing numbers of these workers, migration is a survival strategy. Farm workers are indigenous and peasants from almost all states in Mexico and are received on the international market as cheap labor. Because they are undocumented, it is easy to manipulate their human and labor rights in accordance with employers' interests. For the receiving country, illegal migration is a necessary evil. They know

that it will provide them with surplus profits, which is why they have no genuine interest in solving the problem. But the documented work force is also exploited, particularly through temporary agricultural programs controlled both by countries of origin and receiving countries, as, for example, in the case of the seasonal farm workers' program established by Mexico and Canada.

The thirtieth anniversary of the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with Canada for this program will take place next year, under the Fox administration. This memorandum opened up the door for Mexican peasants to go work in Canada's provinces through a contract called the Mexican

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Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (M/SAWP). This administrative accord was formalized in 1974, thereby opening up the international market to cheap seasonal labor. Both signatories agreed that the memorandum did not have to be recognized by international norms and that the parties involved would resolve by themselves any discrepancy that arose between employers and workers.

The main prerequisites for hiring skilled, specialized labor were that the Mexicans really be peasants (the main requirement to be able to compete with Canadian farm workers), thus guaranteeing the employer an abundant harvest. Under the inter-governmental arrangement, more than two dozen Mexicans were sent the first year; this pilot group was successful in achieving the program's objectives: guaranteeing specialized agricultural labor. The Mexican workers receive a weekly wage equivalent to that of a Canadian worker, lodging, air fare, medical care and benefits set in each province, and are employed for anywhere between 42 days and nine months.

With the initial success, the governments approved the seasonal migration of increasing numbers of peasants, with the backing of Canadian farmers' associations, which decide the number of farm workers not only from Mexico, but also from Caribbean nations, with which Canada has similar agreements.

From the beginning, the Mexican government left to farm workers the responsibility of proving themselves capable, strong and resistant, regardless of the time they had to work in the fields, as a condition to be rehired to return the following season. They would also bear the responsibility of others missing out on "the opportunity of leaving the country with the government's blessing" and the door being closed because of

their incompetence if they failed. It is unfortunate how the government deals with the issue, knowing that economic necessity is vital to the peasants, who have no work at home (the countryside no longer provides a living for them and the federal government has withdrawn the few subsidies that once "supported" them). All of this has forced the peasants to accept the conditions on Canadian farms and maintain higher productivity than was traditional on these lands. For more than a quarter of a century, the number of farm workers has

The main prerequisites for hiring skilled, specialized labor were that the Mexicans really be peasants (the main requirement to be able to compete with Canadian farm workers), to guarantee the employer an abundant harvest.

grown: at first, between 1974 and 1984, it was stable at an average of 640 workers a year; since 1986, it has increased, reaching 10,681 in 2002.

On the other hand, Canadian farmers no longer worry about whether Canadian or Caribbean laborers want to work the land; there is a specialized reserve army at their disposal that they can pick from with no restrictions; all they have to do is request that Mexico send the exact number of peasants they require to fill their needs. It is a real problem for the employers if the Mexican or Caribbean workers demand their labor rights since all they are interested in is production, but if one set of workers does not comply with their demands, there are others who will, most probably Mexicans, since the Mexican government never intervenes when their rights are violated. This is not the case with Canadian or Caribbean work-

ers, whose representatives do protest and demand respect for them, and whose national legislation does back them up when their rights are violated.

Several factors limit the respect for Mexican farm workers' labor rights, but perhaps the most important is the language, which is a real barrier to communication and being heard. Another problem is the farm workers' lack of direct, face-to-face contact with Mexico's consulates in Canada. Telephone consultations are by no means ideal, and consular staff is practically absent from

the farms themselves. Yet another factor is the isolation and distance from one farm to another: the workers feel alone and abandoned. When they return to Mexico, they must make a "return report" in which they state how much they earned, how much they spent, what they spent it on, how much they sent to their families, what relations with their employer were like and what problems came up on the farm. Usually, the worker omits the fact that his labor rights were violated and he limits himself to saying, "Everything was fine. The boss was a good boss." When they do denounce violations of their rights to Mexico's Labor Ministry, hardly ever is any solution arrived at, and the worker feels let down when he gets no response.

The Mexican Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program contract specifies that both parties have rights and obligations. One example is medical insurance for

workers who fall ill or have accidents. Since usually the employer makes sure doctors do not treat the workers, the insurance is a dead letter. It does not make sense for the temporary workers to complain because they run the risk of being considered troublemakers and not being chosen to come back the following season. Despite the fact that both nations have legislation to protect agricultural and migratory workers from risks, danger and labor abuses, most of the time the laws are ignored.

All migrants must not only be under the jurisdiction of their own national

the contrary, it must move in the direction of recognizing and defending all migrants' rights—whether documented or undocumented—and designing policies with an eye to ordered—which is not synonymous with controlled—migration and reconciling both parties' interests (those of workers and employers) fairly.

At the different inter-governmental meetings held over recent years, with the participation of all the Mexican institutions involved in the program, observers have noted that its operational cost is greater than the benefits to the

Mexico must seek an international treaty with Canada to improve farm workers' conditions and not be satisfied with a new accord similar to the current one which treats the worker as a commodity and not a human being.

legislation, but must also be protected by international law and, of course, enjoy the right to organize and belong to a union, collectively bargain, strike, have vacations and other benefits, choose their own place of residence, etc. No one must be denied any right. Therefore, Mexico's government will have to seek an international treaty with Canada to improve farm workers' conditions and not be satisfied with a new administrative accord similar to the current one which treats the worker as a commodity and not a human being.

The program is not the panacea nor the kind of strategy that will stop migration. Migration cannot be stopped, but it can be managed. The Mexican government must stop defending the interests of Canadian farmers and thinking of its fellow countrymen as cheap commodities sent abroad for sale. On

country. Nevertheless, the Labor Ministry has expressed its interest in the program continuing since it represents jobs for peasants, even if only for a few thousand and not the millions of Mexicans who are anxiously seeking employment. The reason that the program has not been widely publicized is precisely that, given its small size and the current job situation in Mexico, it would attract a much larger number of applicants than it could handle.

Farm workers labor in beekeeping, and the cultivation of vegetables, fruit trees, tobacco and ginseng, as well as irrigated agriculture. More than 80 percent go to Ontario. The work that requires the most employees (40 percent) is truck and tobacco farming, although the figures varied in 2002. Truck farming is followed by greenhouses in the number of employees (18 percent).

Tobacco dropped from 20 percent to 13.3 percent, and fruit dropped to 12.5 percent of workers. The greatest increase in hiring vis-à-vis 2001 was for cutting Christmas trees, although there was also an increase in vegetables, greenhouses, apples and ginseng. See the table for the number of farm workers sent to work with each kind of crop in Canada's different provinces.

One important category is that of "nominal workers," made up of individuals requested by name by the employers because they know them and have developed personal relations with them through the seasons. Even though the Mexican worker is able to state his reasons for not wanting to return to a specific employer, he must do so clearly and convincingly to the Labor Ministry's General Employment Office. This constitutes a limitation of his right to freely decide whether he goes back to that specific employer. By contrast, it is sufficient for the employer not to want to rehire a farm worker, with no explanation whatsoever, for him to be replaced by another. In the 2002 season, the employers' demands were not met since, of the 7,295 farm workers requested by name, only 2,412 actually went. The difference was made up by new workers who the bosses had to train, which sometimes means delays in bringing in the harvest.

Program administrators should evaluate these results and, of course, ask themselves why most "nominal" workers did not go back as expected. Perhaps they preferred to cross the border on their own and thus have the opportunity to choose where they work. This hypothesis was borne out in some interviews with workers in which they stated they were mistreated by employers. They complained about vio-

DEMAND FOR MEXICAN AGRICULTURAL WORKERS BY TYPE OF CROP (2002)

PROVINCE	VEGETABLES	APPLES	TOBACCO	GREENHOUSE	NURSERY	GINSENG	TREES	FRUIT	BEEKEEPING	TOTAL
Quebec	2,060	15	232	86	129	0	2	102	0	2,626
Ontario	1,984	476	1,185	1,835	209	282	349	1,233	0	7,553
Manitoba	266	0	0	0	16	0	0	0	0	282
Alberta	128	0	0	0	38	0	5	0	49	220
TOTAL	4,438	491	1,417	1,921	392	282	356	1,335	49	10,681

Source: Labor Ministry General Employment Office.

lations of their labor rights, insufficient pay and workdays; being forced to stay on the farm 24 hours a day on call; being locked in and having no freedom of movement. Despite their difficult living conditions in Mexico, some workers undoubtedly have decided not to return to the program. If we compare 2001 and 2002, we can see that in 2002, the number of workers increased by 4 percent, while in 2001, it increased 12 percent. It is interesting to note that only some of those who go for the first time are offered a one-time economic stipend; the ideal would be that this single payment be made to all those who wish to join the program. The money is for travel expenses from their place of origin to Mexico City to cover the red tape required by the Labor Ministry, and receipts must be presented to justify the expense.

Most of the farm workers come from states near Mexico City like Tlaxcala, the State of Mexico, Guanajuato, Puebla, Hidalgo and Morelos. But this does not mean that only these states participate in the program; almost all the other states in the country partic-

ipate, although with fewer workers. Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba and Alberta are their destinations.

The Seasonal Workers Program will keep the door open as long as Canadian employers continue to profit from using documented workers. This is one of the factors that explains the increase in the demand for Mexican workers. For Canada, the program represents—on a small scale—relief from the pressure of permanent migration and the increase in demographic rates; provincial governments do not have to come up with strategies for housing, education, social or health assistance for temporary agricultural migrants, resulting in considerable economic savings. The expenses they do incur during the farm workers' stay are the responsibility of the employer and, of course, must be included in the farms' production costs.

The program is a small door given the lack of government employment strategies and represents less than one percent of the undocumented migration to the United States. Even though the comparison is of thousands versus mil-

lions, this is the only door open to Mexican peasants.

CONCLUSION

Massive migration of Mexicans to the United States and Canada shows the successive capitalist development models' clear inability to resolve the migration problem and to productively absorb the Mexican work force. The Mexican government's neoliberal labor policies (wage ceilings, austerity in public spending, trade liberalization, technological modernization ruled exclusively by profitability, imports of basic grains, etc.) have brought the swift and continued impoverishment of the rural and urban population, as well as the abrupt deterioration of national production by micro, small and medium-sized companies. This has resulted in the reduction of the work force needed for domestic investment and an increase in migration. It is in this context that thousands of peasants accept becoming part of the Mexican Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program with Canada.

Mexican Canada scholar Sebastián Escalante states that the North American Free Trade Agreement does not seem to have a direct influence on the movement of Mexicans to Canada, given the small number of temporary migrants who participate. Only if ultimately they became a larger flow, similar to that which goes to the United States, will there be a need for an expansion of migration talks and negotiations between Mexico and Canada.

Although it has grown, for Mexico, the Mexican Seasonal Agricultural

cause of the existence of this program, which is actually a copy of previous labor exchange programs like the U.S. Bracero Program.¹

Despite everything, Mexican agricultural workers think participating in the program is beneficial for them and their families since it allows them to resolve their economic needs for short periods every year, even though the price they pay is very hard work and being away from their families. While they receive lower pay than Canadian workers, of course it is more than they would make in Mexico.

From the beginning, the Mexican government left to farm workers the responsibility of proving themselves capable, strong and resistant, regardless of the time they had to work in the fields, as a condition to be rehired.

Workers Program with Canada still has limited results given the expectations it created as a solution to the peasant population's need for a decent job, even if abroad.

On the other hand, control of entry and continuity of workers has been a factor in the program's success. Their high productivity has contributed to its expanding yearly and to the program's not becoming a new source of undocumented workers, given the distance between Mexico and Canada. In addition, since the workers are not protected by unions and Mexican consulates are very limited in their systematic relations with them, there is no need to guarantee respect for their labor rights, despite the fact that the agreement explicitly mentions this.

Mexico and Canada have a special migratory relationship, and not only be-

The program operates under the aegis of the Mexican Labor Ministry's General Employment Office, whose workload has increased in trying to satisfy the demand of Canadian farmers for workers. The staff labors in less than optimum conditions. The procedure agreed upon in the memorandum for correcting anomalies in the program and for solving problems that come up between employers and workers presupposes that Mexican consular staff visits the farms. However, because of the long distances involved and the lack of personnel in Mexico's legations, complaints are almost never attended to appropriately or in a timely fashion. This makes it necessary to design plans to organize the work to be able to attend to farm workers' needs, both in the office and on the farm itself, with visits that would bring daily problems

clearly into focus. One option would be to divide the country into zones, establishing local program offices in areas with large numbers of farm workers, who could then be serviced by a representative with support from citizens' organizations in the communities.

The program will probably grow more than 60 percent in the next five years, which will present the Mexican government with a major challenge requiring the urgent use of sufficient human and financial resources to cover the expectations of the Canadian government and, as a result, generate more hard currency for Mexico. In 1998 alone, 25 million dollars came in as a result of the efforts of Mexican workers in Canada.

The program has been successful in terms of the diplomatic relations between the two nations. It will be even more successful if International Labor Organization-stipulated labor rights are recognized. It will be doubly successful—not just for one party but also for the peasants themselves—when the farm workers are taken into account as people and not as goods; the door must be for everyone interested in going through it without limiting his human or labor rights. **MM**

NOTE

¹ One part of bilateral policy that still has not been sufficiently studied is Mexican refugees in Canada. See Sebastián Escalante, "Refugiados mexicanos en el Canadá de los noventa: Reconsiderando algunas suposiciones migratorias," Teresa Gutiérrez, comp., *Canadá, un estado postmoderno* (Mexico City: Editorial Plaza y Valdés, 2000).

Tlatelolco Memory of a City

Mauricio Magdaleno Chapa*

*There are people who detest a place
because it is linked to fateful moments in
their lives; others see in a place its happy
nature; these experiences also
make up the city.*

ALDO ROSSI



Tlatelolco is a landmark in the city. Memory is our starting point for defining Tlatelolco: we find different historic moments of urban integration there, allowing us to understand the city we see today. It can be recognized by the Three Cultures Plaza, which brings together a ceremonial pre-Hispanic center, the Santiago Tlatelolco Franciscan church, the *tecpan*, or the indigenous government imposed by the Spaniards, the No-noalco-Tlatelolco housing project, the Foreign Relations Ministry tower and the subway line: this sums

* Architect. He has participated in the restoration of historic buildings in the states of Oaxaca, Guerrero and Morelos.

up some of the most significant moments of what is today Mexico City.

Dramatic stories are also an inseparable part of its history, like the October 2, 1968 student massacre in which the army shot into the crowd of unarmed young people participating in the student movement, and the September 1985 earthquake, when Tlatelolco was one of the city's most severely affected areas, with the collapse of the Nuevo León building and serious damage to others.

Tlatelolco was one of Mexico City's first settlements in the pre-Hispanic era. The first moment of architectural integration occurred when the first settlers established the indigenous city on an island in the Texcoco Lake in what we now know

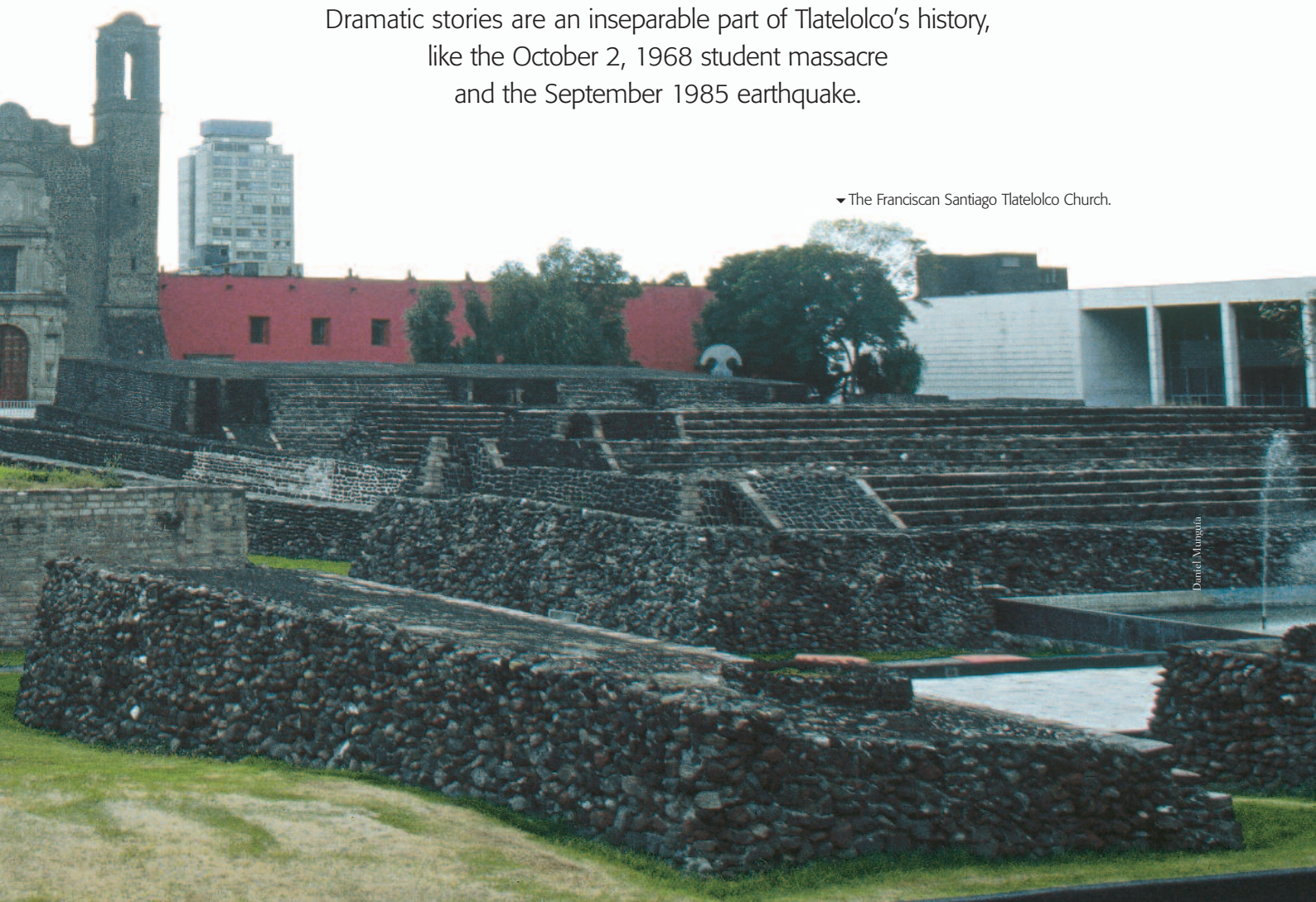


as the Valley of Mexico. The most important sites were Tenochtitlan in the middle and Tlatelolco in the north, where Mesoamerica's main pre-Hispanic trade center developed. But this caused military clashes with the inhabitants of Tenochtitlan. According to other sources, after the city of Tenochtitlan was founded, the Mexicas scattered to the four corners of the world and in 1337 a group of malcontents settled between the lake and the banks of reed-grass on a terrace (*ilatelli*) connected to the mainland by five or six avenues, two of which went directly to Tlatelolco. It is also said that the Mexicas lived together in Tenochtitlan 12 years and then some separated off and founded Tlatelolco Xilliyacac.

With the arrival of the Spaniards, the imperial College of the Indies of Santa Cruz of Santiago Tlatelolco was established in Tlatelolco to teach (or impose) their faith. At the same time the cities of Tlatelolco and Tenochtitlan were razed, and on top of them, what would be the city of Mexico was traced, using some elements of the pre-Hispanic city, like the direction of the streets and avenues. This was the beginning of the destruction of the lake city; the drying of the lakes was an unfortunate policy the results of which we still suffer from today, particularly the loss of the area's ecological balance. The valley had four lakes where *chinampas*, or artificial islands, were used for dwelling and agriculture.

Dramatic stories are an inseparable part of Tlatelolco's history,
like the October 2, 1968 student massacre
and the September 1985 earthquake.

▼ The Franciscan Santiago Tlatelolco Church.





Carlos Ameghiani



Enrique Trejo

The population explosion and the massive use of automobiles changed the face of the city from the first half of the twentieth century.

Chinampas caused only minimal changes in the physical environment, and the city had an efficient transportation network inherited from the pre-Hispanic settlement made up of channels. These, however, gradually disappeared along with the *chinampas*, except for a few that survived into the mid-twentieth century and the ones in Xochimilco, the only reminder of what the lake city had once been.

Tlatelolco's second moment came at the end of the eighteenth and in the early nineteenth centuries, when Mexico City achieved a real identity and a style of its own. It rose on the site of what had been the city of Tenochtitlan. Tlatelolco was still on the periphery of Mexico City and small, scattered constructions on what were undoubtedly *chinampas* could still be seen there.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church was stripped of many of its worldly goods. Since it was the owner of almost half the land in the city, this meant that the Franciscans' properties in Tlatelolco were trans-

ferred to government hands. The monastery was turned into offices and a military prison. New streets and avenues were opened up, becoming the basic elements of the urban transformation. Six neighborhoods for workers and lower income people were founded in 1884: Morelos, La Bolsa, Díaz de León, Maza, Rastro and Valle Gómez.

In the early twentieth century, the eighteenth-century city had been embellished upon by the new architecture from the *Porfiriato* (the 30-year dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz). This was the case of the Juárez neighborhood, which was very representative of the pomp of the *Porfirista* elite. There, European architecture, mainly French, would mix with Art Deco and the Californian style characteristic of other recently founded neighborhoods like the Condesa, the Roma and later, the Hipódromo Condesa, structured around several avenues vital for the city like San Juan de Letrán, Juárez, Insurgentes and Reforma. This marked the beginning of an unprecedented demographic explosion, interrupted by the 1910 Revolution. But Tlatelolco continued to be



Tlatelolco is the emblem of the profound transformations of the city over the years and an example of how cities are forced to take on new roles.



Daniel Munguia



Verónica López

▲ The Nonoalco-Tlatelolco Housing Project (1960).

on the periphery of the city, preserving the church-plaza-market residential layout. Crisscrossed by innumerable railroad tracks, it was home to important railroad installations, the city's main *pulque* customs house, demolished in the 1960s, a graveyard fed by the Revolution and a train cemetery, around which innumerable stories and legends arose.

Finally, the third moment came with the end of the Mexican Revolution. When the city began to grow more vigorously, important housing began to be built like the Ermita Building in Tacubaya (1930), designed by Juan Segura, and later the Barurto Building in the Condesa neighborhood (1942), designed by Francisco J. Serrano, perhaps the best proponents of Art Deco architecture.

In the 1940s, state economic policy produced high inflation, with a dramatic effect on the price of rentals, making life particularly difficult for lower income groups. At the end of that decade, the first high density housing project was built in the city, the President Alemán Urban Center (1949), designed by Mario Pani. Later, this kind of housing project would culminate in Tlatelolco with the beginning of the Nonoalco-Tlatelolco Housing Project (1960), designed again by Pani, on an area previously occupied by an expanse of miserable shantytowns dating from the nineteenth century. It was in these shantytowns that, years earlier, Luis Buñuel had filmed *Los olvidados* (known in English as *The Young and the Damned*), a film recently declared a World Heritage Treasure. The end of

the 1950s also saw violent clashes in the plaza and surrounding areas between railroad workers and police, a precedent for the bloody repression of 10 years later. The church continued to be used as a military prison and the former college was Public Junior High School 16. Industries and shops were established there and broad avenues were built to accommodate the massive use of automobiles.

The layout of the Nonoalco-Tlatelolco Housing Project would not conform to the previous pattern of the streets: the buildings were isolated from the street, voluminous shapes located independently of the outer boundaries.

Later, centralist policies and the lack of opportunities throughout the nation caused massive migration to the capital in search of better living conditions. With that, Tlatelolco's housing project and surrounding neighborhoods like Morelos and Peralvillo began to fill up. Frequently, the inhabitants of these neighborhoods built their own houses, copying middle-class commercial architecture in an attempt to satisfy their wishes for modernity. When the building is finished, even if a dwelling may be adequate from the material point of view, the architectural quality and incorporation into the urban landscape are very poor. This happened to Tlatelolco, the emblem of the profound transformations of the city over the years and an example of how cities are forced to take on new roles. If they did not, life itself as a human congregation would be threatened. ■■■



Santa María de la Ribera Its Wonder Remains

Agustín Jiménez*



▲ Moorish kiosk in Santa María de la Ribera Alameda Park.

I remember that when I was a child I liked to be taken on Sundays to play in the Santa María de la Ribera Alameda park. For me, it was

a pleasure to watch and play under the Moorish kiosk or listen to the adults tell the ever-changing tale of the dinosaur hidden in the Chopo Museum or try to remember all the precious stones and minerals and exhibits showing the spiritual benefits of stones that I had seen in the UNAM

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Geology Museum across the street from the Alameda. But what excited me the most was the promise of going to the Majestic movie house in the afternoon. Ramón Gómez de la Serna has already said it: lines outside movie houses, lines of hunger for fantasy.

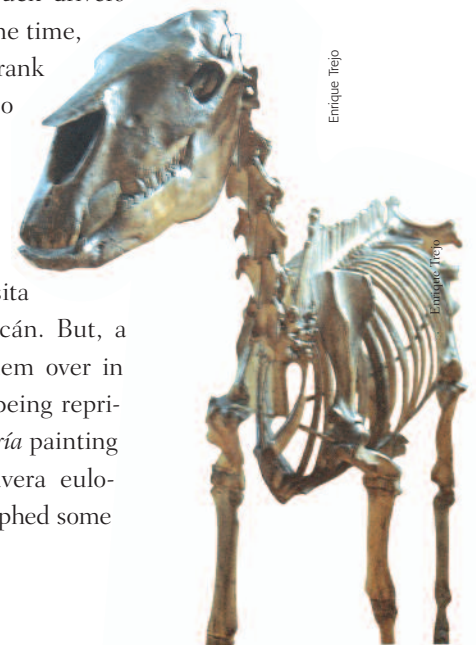
A quick list of the emblematic places in the Santa María de la Ribera neighborhood shows us the great importance it has in our city's evolution. Undoubtedly, three places come immediately to mind: the Alameda's Moorish kiosk or pavilion, the Chopo Museum and the UNAM Geology Museum, the last two of which held the famous dinosaur for a while. In addition to these places, we can also point to the Noanoalco Bridge, where Rafael Catana wrote his poems; the Dalia Market, where a death squad brought together its emotions every day to survive; and the Mascarones House, on Ribera de San Cosme Boulevard, which now holds a UNAM-sponsored foreign language school. But these are not the only important places for the Santa María de la Ribera resident. Just as important as the Alameda with its Moorish kiosk was the famous *pulque*¹ saloon, or *pulquería*, Las Glorias de Tlatilco (The Glories of Tlatilco), located behind the Consulado River and across from the Casco de Santo Tomás, that was photographed by Edward Weston, where the famous *tlachicotón*² flowed like nectar of the gods.

We already know that *pulque* was the drink of those who lived rough, of the poor, of the



▲ The Chopo Museum.

tenements, of the de-classed of the naive paradise of the Juárez or Polanco neighborhoods. Yes, stevedores drank *pulque*; truck drivers drank *pulque*; and the artists of the time, in the 1930s and 1940s, also drank *pulque*. For example, Frida Kahlo developed the idea of painting a few *pulquerías*, among them Las Glorias de Tlatilco. Kahlo had her students paint indigo and Mexican pink murals on the La Rosita *pulquería* on a corner in Coyoacán. But, a year later, the owner painted them over in white because he was afraid of being reprimanded. Yes, as we know, *pulquería* painting disappeared, although Diego Rivera eulogized it and Tina Modotti photographed some



Enrique Trejo

Enrique Trejo



Verónica López

▲ UNAM Geology Museum.

illustrious figures in front of their walls or napping on the floor of the fermenting shed. Cantinas and *pulquerías*, billiard halls and public baths, Chinese cafes and hole-in-the-wall shops, tenements and Porfirian houses, Santa María is crisscrossed with these little corners where the artists of life earned their living and daily bread, like the Callejón del Sauce (Willow Alley) where Mariachi song composer José Alfredo Jiménez played soccer with his friends, the neighborhood kids, before asking for his first tequila and singing one of his first songs.

Ancestry and hierarchy some would say; lineage, would say Don Artemio de Valle-Arizpe, who always gives the exact address of the place each of these famous people lived:

for example, Don Guillermo Prieto and Don Lucas Alamán, at 95 San Cosme Avenue; and Don Miguel Miramón, before he was president, near where the old Roxy Cinema used to be, on Ribera de San Cosme, that used to be called Tlacopán Boulevard. But if the Chopo Museum is important in this context of the city, the cultural street market that it spawned is another emblem of the national counterculture that must not disappear: history and micro-history as Don Luis González y González teaches us.

Yes, when I was a boy, I lived in a very large house. The house is at 313 Cedro Street. It was one of those old houses in the Santa María neighborhood; more than large, it was deep, very light and not at all labyrinthine. It was full of a calm and exemplary mystery. The balconies looked out to the west onto Callejón del Sauce and next to them, four eucalyptus trees filled to overflowing all the fantasies of travel and dreams that a six-year-old boy could have. For me, those trees were the proof of what was later the Santa María's Alameda with its kiosk, that time when I was a boy: a man who has not yet dreamed of time.

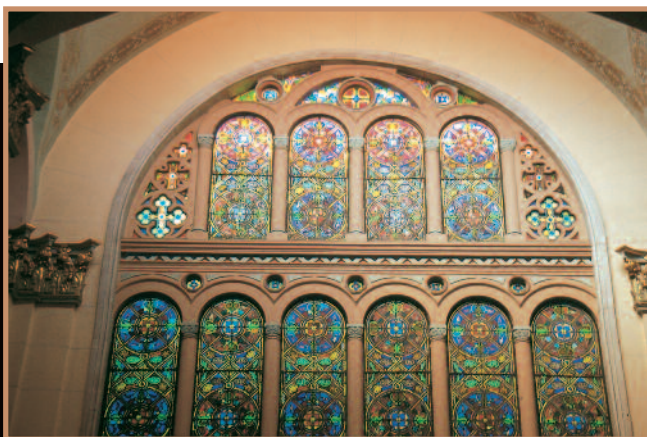
Fortunately, we know that not everything is forgotten. For example, the engineer Ramón Ibarrola was the builder of the Moorish kiosk, which has its own history in the history of Mexico City. It was built to be Mexico's pavilion at the New Orleans International Exposition (1884-1885) and in the Saint Louis, Missouri

World's Fair. It was also put up in the 1889 Paris World's Fair. When that was over, it was brought to Mexico City and set up near downtown, inaugurated September 16, 1851, on the southern side of the Central Alameda park, across from the Corpus Christi Church, where a large wooden barracks used as a cafe and meeting place had stood. When it was decided that among the new buildings put up to commemorate the first centenary of Independence Day, September 16, 1810, there should be a monument to Don Benito Juárez, the place selected was the site occupied by the Moorish Pavilion on the Central Alameda, looking out on what was already named Juárez Avenue. To make way for the semicircle Juárez monument, commissioned out to architect Guillermo Heredia, the pavilion was moved to the middle of the Santa María de la Ribera Alameda park, where it remains

today, benefitting lovers and children who by its side dream of paradise or of being pirates setting out to conquer all the lands of a thousand and one nights.

But, when was the Santa María de la Ribera neighborhood born? Arturo Sotomayor tells us that in the year 1856 there was, if not the growth of the city, at least the first opening up of streets, tracing the enormous plots of land on which the monasteries were built. This change in the city's look was born with the September 16, 1856 decree by Ignacio Comonfort to "extend the Los Dolores alleyway to San Juan de Letrán Street" (now the Eje Central). The new street would be called La Independencia; today it is 16 de Septiembre Street. The War of the Reform (1858-1861) put a stop to any attempts at enlarging the city. But, that same year, the maps show enlargements: the San-

Santa María is crisscrossed with these little corners where the artists of life earned their living and daily bread.



Stained-glass windows in the interior of the Sagrada Familia Parish.



La Dalia Market has survived many battles.

Rubén Vázquez

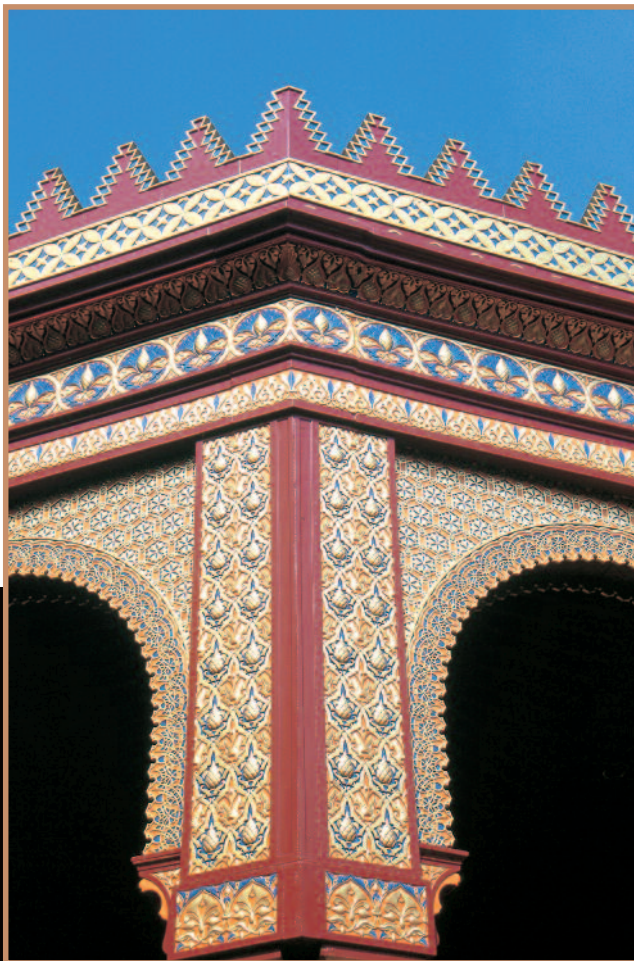
Verónica López

ta María de la Ribera neighborhood has already been laid out and began to be populated: there were 35 buildings of different sizes. To the south of Santa María, San Cosme Boulevard has more constructions whose builders preferred the north side of the old road to Tlacopán, where the first leisure estates of Hernán Cortés had been.

The Santa María de la Ribera neighborhood was built on the land of the Estanislao Flores family and others. During the *Porfiriato* (the 30-year dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz), an entire city block was allotted to the Alameda park and the Moorish Pavilion was placed there. Across from it was erected the building that today houses the UNAM Geology Museum and on Chopo Street —today called Enrique González Martínez Street— the Japanese pavilion was built for the festivities of the Centenary of Independence, which would

later be home to the Natural History Museum until it became a UNAM cultural center in 1975, better known as the Chopo Museum. The neighborhood is bordered on the north by Ricardo Flores Magón Avenue, formerly Noanoalco; on the east by Insurgentes Norte; on the south by Ribera de San Cosme Boulevard; and on the west by the Circuito Interior, previously known as Río de Consulado.

So, Santa María is not only a geographical space or a territory of desire where children re-learn how to live and reclaim the hopes of life from their dreams, to believe in their city again. Yes, it is not only a bunch of shops and dwellings; it is not only the weave of day-to-day desire that is transformed from second to second; it is the territory that always creates in me the effect of a strange illumination of truth. Santa María de la Ribera or, better said, our city: its urban culture and its polit-



Rubén Vázquez

Detail of the Moorish kiosk.

The Moorish kiosk was built to be Mexico's pavilion at the New Orleans International Exposition (1884-1885).



Carlos Angrogiani

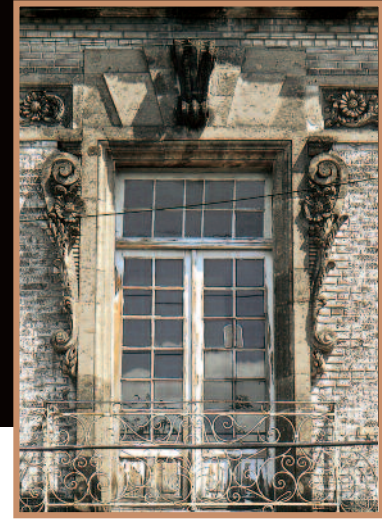
Alleyways and vecindades are part of Santa María de la Ribera's paradigm.



Carlos Angriellini



Carlos Angriellini



Carlos Angriellini

ical culture or sexuality are subjected to an exclusive vision of hyper-reality that constitutes a unique, unrepeatable scene.

Everything vanishes before its grandiose monstrosity, even the body writing this, even the body that, due to a resulting effect of being fed up, adopts an almost transparent form, a moral lightness close to disappearance. Everything that surrounds us in Mexico City participates in this simulation of desertification except those places that pick us or

that we pick and are emblematic, like the neighborhood where I was born: Santa María de la Ribera. Yes, everything changes in the city, so that its wonder is what remains. ■■■

NOTES

¹ *Pulque* is a traditional alcoholic drink made from the sap of the maguey plant. [Translator's Note.]

² *Tlachicotón* is slang for *pulque*. [Translator's Note.]

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A long, narrow courtyard in San Rafael, Chile, featuring a series of brick arches and a red wall at the end. The courtyard is flanked by brick buildings with arched windows and doorways. The ground is paved, and several potted plants are placed along the sides. The lighting is warm, suggesting late afternoon or early morning. The text "San Rafael The Pulse of the City" is overlaid in the upper center, and "Sury Attic*" is in the upper right. The name "Daniel Munguia" is written vertically on the right side.

San Rafael The Pulse of the City

Sury Attic*

In contrast with the rest of the Christian —and not-so-Christian— world, in Mexico City, mentioning San Rafael is not mainly a reference to the archangel who, with his flaming sword on high, leads the celestial hosts in the eternal struggle against evil. Or was the one with the flaming iron, always at war, Gamaliel or perhaps Gabriel? I don't know. In any case, in this city, San Rafael does not have a very religious connotation. So much so that instead of calling it by its full name, we shorten it to San Rafa, which here, even though it is not at the point of a blazing sword, is aglow.

As a neighborhood, San Rafa is a very modern suburb. It is in fact the first suburb built outside of what we know as Mexico City's historic downtown. I consciously call it a suburb and not a settlement because from the start, from the first

moment it was conceived, San Rafa was planned for housing. A settlement is, by contrast, an area inhabited randomly with or without a prior plan. I make the distinction because being the first planned space outside the downtown area in this city is not of small merit. What is more, on reviewing its history, clearly it stayed practically the same size from the time of its foundation in the pre-Hispanic era, to the last layout done by the Spanish conquistadors in the sixteenth century to make a residential area before it became the San Rafael neighborhood.

The first suburbs outside Mexico City were created to accommodate the immigration that saturated and flooded the area built in the second half of the nineteenth century. These urbanized areas were given the name “*colonia*,” or “colony” which we still call them today. The word had its origin in the groups of foreign immigrants who settled in the city, organizing around their communities; the area

* Architect and director of the Spatial Architecture Workshop (TAE).



San Cosme Damián Parish.

Mario Ruiz Rocha



Detail of a facade on Serapio Rendón Street.

Daniel Munguía



Housing complex on Serapio Rendón Street.

Daniel Munguía



Mauro Ruiz Rocha



Daniel Munguia

The neighborhood's architecture is still a rich mixture.

San Rafa is in fact the first suburb built outside of what we know as Mexico City's historic downtown.

where they settled was known as the foreign colony, for example, the French Colony or the American Colony, which were in what we now know as the Colonia Juárez, or the Juárez neighborhood. We must not call these areas “*barrios*” (another word for neighborhood in Spanish) because *barrios* refer to a very traditional, old, pre-nineteenth-century settlement like, for example, the La Candelaria *barrio*.

It was not until 1859, practically 550 years after the foundation of the city, which had maintained its urban layout unchanged, that on land known as the Potrero de la Horca, an influential, successful real estate promoter, Fernando Somera, began to project what at that time was called the Colonia de los Arquitectos, or the Architects' Neighborhood. It was initially conceived as a suburb for fine arts students of the San Carlos Academy, which still exists. This neighborhood would have a privileged location. On the north was the boulevard that led to Tacuba, called Tlacopan —now Ribera de San Cosme— and on the east it was very close to the Paseo de la Reforma.

When you look at a map of the area, noting the urban layout, you immediately see that the east side is different from the west. This is due to the fact that the neighborhood developed in two dif-

ferent stages. The first stage, dating from 1859, was built in an irregular fashion, taking advantage of the servants' footpaths through the fields. To have more lots to sell and make more money, crossways streets were not built: this is the origin of such long blocks on the north-south axis and the haphazard, angle shape of Gómez Farías Street, for example. This first stage is bordered by Sullivan, Insurgentes Centro, Gómez Farías and Rosas Moreno Streets. Years later, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, the second stage of San Rafael was begun on land belonging to a ranch of the same name, this time with French investors. The layout of the eastern area is more regular, with almost square blocks, about 100 meters on each side, with model lots.

The interior of the neighborhood's urban layout is very homogeneous and uniform. Some buildings might catch your eye, such as a private university on Gómez Farías Street. In the area where everyday life goes on, time has made for a mixture of uses, although the buildings were conceived mainly as dwellings. Architecturally speaking, the scene is very similar to nearby neighborhoods, which today make up the city's center. This is why we find a rich mix of styles side by side. They go



The Plaza Hotel designed by Mario Pani.



The neighborhood continues to be basically residential.

from the eclectic homes built during the *Porfiriato* (the 30-year dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz ending in 1910), which imitate the pretentious mode of architecture typical of France in that period, to Art Deco, the search for a national architecture, severe functionalism and recent buildings.

Since it was mainly intended as a residential area, San Rafa does not have important public spaces, like the nearby Santa María de la Ribera to the

north, which has an Alameda park, or the Tabacalera neighborhood to the east, where the structure originally intended as the legislature is now the Monument to the Revolution, and is surrounded by an important open space. Although its buildings are not large or monuments, the importance of the San Rafael neighborhood lies in its location, strategic to the city. The avenues built after urbanization and which today form its perimeter make the neighborhood function as a hinge, or a giant round-about that organizes a great deal of the movement in what is considered the city center. That is why although internally there is not a great deal of movement, the avenues that make up its perimeter are especially vibrant. It is the point where Insurgentes Centro, San Cosme, Circuito Interior and Parque Vía come together. Without these arteries that surround San Rafa, the city would be paralyzed and would not function as we know it today.

Within this perimeter, there are two architecturally important buildings that should be mentioned. The first was designed by Matías Goeritz with the assistance of Luis Barragán, on Parque Vía Avenue. It is called “Echo,” a museum of movement or space to “generate moments,” a milestone in twentieth-century architecture since, according to some critics, this building was the beginning of what has been called “emotional architecture.” Today, the building holds a small university forum called “El Tecolote” (or “the Owl”), and although the space is totally unrelated to what the architects built, it is adapted to the original structure and anyone familiar with the project could easily imagine its origins.

The other building is the Plaza Hotel at the corner of Parque Vía and Insurgentes. This hotel is the only building constructed by Mario Pani as part of a master plan to change the location of the city’s financial and business center. The unrealized project consisted of organizing a series of multiple-use buildings around a very large rotunda, just at the intersection of Reforma and Insurgentes. The building’s design is similar to another hotel that Pani constructed previously in downtown Morelia. Last year, the Plaza Hotel was sold to a group of investors working on a project to rebuild it.

An urban space of exchange and contrast, with a marked difference between the neighborhood's perimeter and its interior. With the years, a few dives and old-fashioned taverns like the Golden Bar have insinuated themselves among the homes.

As I have said, San Rafael is a *colonia*; however, time and the steadfastness of its inhabitants have given it the life of a *barrio*. It is a neighborhood that also has its temperament without being as rough as the nearby *Colonia Guerrero*, where people habitually kill because somebody gave them a dirty look. As Jaime López says, "Here, only the brothers rule." Not only because traditionally many public employees have lived in this *colonia-barrio*, but because the streets themselves boast many crooks, and not only the kind that sit behind desks.

In other, more pretentious, milieus, when you are a public servant with good taste, even if only on payday, the appropriate behavior is to go and enjoy a moment of leisure and tranquility with the boss's secretary at the Sanborn's bar on Insurgentes Avenue. There, the decoration backdrops covered in burned wine-colored velvet with diamond-shaped crossed tape, combined with the pine chairs burnished to a chocolate mahogany hue, coordinated with the mirror-topped tables reflecting the same dark wood, imitation coffered ceiling, help create an intimacy ideal for inviting erotic-romantic contemplation.

Like in little-town stores, in the San Rafael neighborhood, nothing is ever out of stock: from romantic spaces, seductive and inviting intimacy, to streets where, if you're sufficiently macho, you can shoot off your gun just to know who rules. But other kinds of people, the ones who want to raise their cultural level, or those who already did and are educated, also fit in. Here in the San Rafael neighborhood, famous writer Renato Leduc lived and gave the once-over to every more or less decent-looking girl. Who doesn't remember that the 1937 Republican immigrants made their first beachhead in the city and that Arana's itinerant bookstore had its starting point here. Who doesn't know that the temptations of illicit, unregulated love can be found here. Yes, there are many



Building on Sadi Carnot Street.



Old abandoned movie houses are not forgotten.

contrasts in this great neighborhood: theaters and dying cinemas like the Cosmos, dance halls or churches, Boca del Río ("the River's Mouth," a famous restaurant) where you can eat delicious seafood. Yes, for example, on Sadi Carnot Street, you can browse through used books in the La Nave de



Mario Ruiz Rocha

The building of the Valley of Mexico University is representative of San Rafael's architectural splendor.

San Rafael was initially conceived as a suburb for fine arts students of the San Carlos Academy, which still exists.

Lulio bookstore. You can dive into the piles of books in the no bigger than 15 square meters of bookstore and, with dedication and patience, if you know and love books, you can even find a tome by a well-known author, a first edition with special binding, autographed and dedicated to another, no less notable writer. With the little book in hand, if you have time to look through it, the least you can

do is have coffee a few steps from there, at the corner of Antonio Caso in the Café Gran Premio, one of the best known spots in the city's coffee-lovers' circuit. A glowing city that reminds us of its beginnings to the tune of mambo, bolero or danzón, a sensual neighborhood that discovers its impulses when a poet looks at it or a slip of a girl pitilessly walks its streets. **MM**



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Photos by Daniel Munguia

Optometrist's cabinet.

Science, Art and History In The Museum of Light



Museum entrance.



Mural *The Tree of Science* by Roberto Montenegro.

What do fireflies and glow-worms, a frankfurter cooked by the heat of the Sun, the micro-organisms present in stagnant water, the colors of birds, a kaleidoscope, an optical illusion and a camera all have in common? They can all be found in the Museum of Light, a small but splendid, monothematic museum that uses the most varied forms of communication to examine the phenomenon of light from different points of view: art, biology, chemistry, physics, ecology and even mood.

Inaugurated November 18, 1996, the Museum of Light was born thanks to interest from the UNAM's science dissemination office in rediscovering what daily life has made obvious: that light is indispensable for life; that without it our eyes would have no purpose, our planet would lack colors, plants would never grow no matter how much

we watered them, and there would be no art or science because Man simply would not exist.

Conceived as a science museum pedagogically servicing students of different ages, the museum captures the attention of adults, too, for whom it is also novel to see what light is, how it is produced, how it travels and what happens when it encounters matter. As if that were not enough, the museum combines the basic components of culture: science, art and history.

THE MUSEUM, HISTORY AND ART

The history of the building and its artistic aspects led university officials to recognize the need to integrate both into the museography to enrich the visitor's experience.



The eco-sphere is one of the museum's main attractions.

Located in Mexico City's historic downtown area, the museum occupies what in the early seventeenth century was the church of the Saint Peter and Saint Paul Maximus College, one of the first and most important educational institutions of the viceroyalty, presided over by the Jesuits. When the order was expelled from Mexico in 1775, the building went through a series of changes. Among other things it was used as the headquarters for the Sacred Royal Pawnshop, the General Archives of the Realm, the Peace College (a famous school for girls) and the barracks for the Military College. During the nineteenth-century French intervention it was a warehouse for the invading army's foodstuffs, and in the twentieth century, during the Revolution, it was occupied by federal forces. It was also a cafe with live music and a correctional school. It was the site of two important historical events between

1822 and 1824: Agustín de Iturbide was sworn in as the first emperor of Mexico and the first Constituent Congress met here. From 1944 to 1977, it was the National Periodical Library (the name is still written above the main entrance) and later it was abandoned for 20 years.

In 1922, the minister of public education and illustrious promotor of the arts and sciences, José Vasconcelos, set up what was called the Salon for Free Discussions in the building; he commissioned several painters and artisans to restore and decorate the vaults, arches and pilasters. Three magnificent stained-glass windows, the decoration of the arches and two murals have survived from that time; one of the murals, by Xavier Guerrero, entitled *The Signs of the Zodiac*, is on the chapel dome; the other, by Roberto Montenegro, *The Tree of Science*, is on what was the chancel.

Montenegro's work was the object of conflicts worth briefly recounting. His original work was opposed and altered to the point that the painter requested that his signature be removed. The central figure of the original mural had been a semi-nude man tied to a tree and surrounded by enigmatic, threatening women. Vasconcelos himself asked Montenegro to change the male figure, which the painter did, without any damage to the work. But, in 1944, students from the National School of Visual Arts were commissioned to restore the mural, ignoring Montenegro's offer to participate. When they were finished, Montenegro asked that his signature be taken off it because he no longer recognized the work as his own: they had transformed it, starting by the fact that they had used oils on what had originally been painted in tempura. Today the work, representative of the beginnings of Mexican muralism, has been restored by a group of specialists and is part of the museum's artistic patrimony.

DIFFERENT FACETS OF LIGHT

Despite its small size, the museum has considerable content. It offers information, among other things, about the nature of light, the world of colors, light and the biosphere, starlight, optics and light in the arts and in time.

A visit begins with a time line of light linking history, art and science from the viceroyalty until today, and continues in sections which examine light by answering different questions: How are artificial and natural light created? What is cold light? What produces luminescence? How do organisms change in the depths of the sea according to the amount of light they receive? How do human beings perceive color? What colors have chemical and physical origins? What would happen if we had more eyes, or a single eye? How can the brain be fooled through vision? These are just a few of the questions.



Science and art co-exist in the Museum of Light.



Details of two stained-glass windows in the museum's interior and the mural that greets the visitor at the entrance.

Of great interest are the eco-sphere, a self-sufficient ecosystem that keeps its inhabitants alive solely by regulating the light they receive; the section dedicated to optical illusions; and the segment that deals with light of chemical or electrical origin. The sections are interactive, with brief explanatory plaques, supplemented by docents, students who collaborate with the museum demonstrating how different apparatuses work and helping the public to get the most out of their visits. In the optometrist's cabinet, we can do a self-examination of our sight, learning about astigmatism, myopia and color-blindness. There are also plaques in Braille since the school for the blind and visually impaired is located nearby, and its students are among the museum's most assiduous visitors.

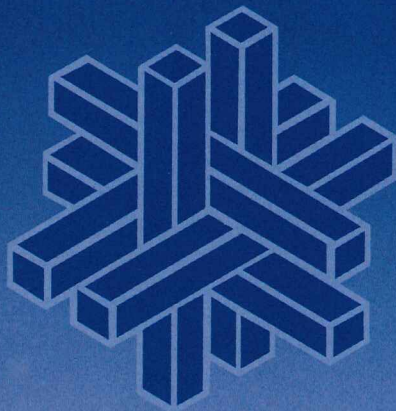
Interacting with its surroundings, the Museum of Light tries to capture the attention of children and the itinerant salespersons who populate the streets surrounding it every day. It also offers temporary exhibits, activities, workshops and demon-

strations, which do everything from revealing the mystery of birds' coloring, putting together a kaleidoscope and demonstrating that bodies that emit light are not necessarily hot (because cold light exists) to cooking frankfurters in a solar oven. All these activities enrich our knowledge and allow us to understand that light is not only basic for life on this planet, but that it also expresses everything that is positive and vital in our humanity.

Elsie Montiel
Editor

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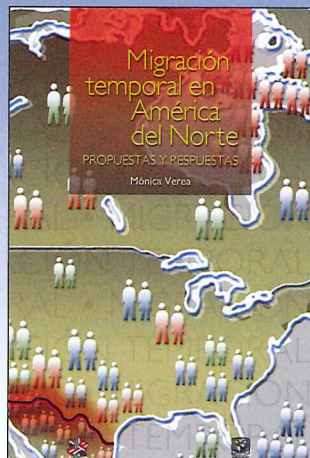
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p u b l i c a t i o n s

Migración temporal en América del Norte. Propuestas y respuestas

Mónica Vereá

The author puts forward the causes behind international migration and studies the evolution of policies on temporary migrants (tourists, businessmen, workers and students) to the United States and Canada, their impact on the integration of Latino communities in general and Mexican communities in particular, and how the September 11 attacks were a turning point in the regional migratory debate.



CHIAPAS

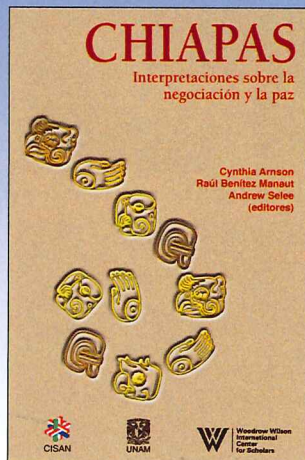
Interpretaciones sobre la negociación y la paz

Cynthia Arnsón
Raúl Benítez Manaut
Andrew Selee
(editores)

Chiapas. Interpretaciones sobre la negociación y la paz

Cynthia Arnsón,
Raúl Benítez Manaut,
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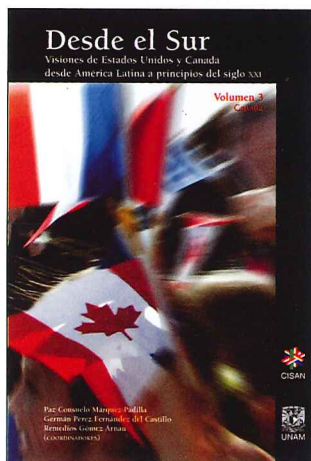
This book presents the debate on the Chiapas peace process and the causes behind the failure of the negotiations. Mexican and foreign academics, as well as some of the conflict's protagonists, analyze its structural causes, indigenous rights and the San Andrés Accords.



Desde el sur. Visiones de Estados Unidos y Canadá desde América Latina a principios del siglo XXI, vol. 3, Canadá

Paz Consuelo Márquez-Padilla,
Germán Pérez Fernández del Castillo,
Remedios Gómez Arnau, comps.

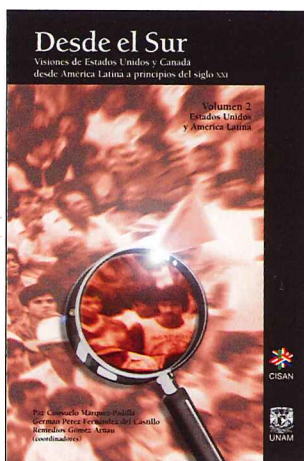
Stimulating articles by well-known Canada scholars make up the third and last volume of this series, reflecting the country's different characteristics: a post-national, multi-cultural, pro-internationalist and multi-lateral state, receiver of migrants, a paradigm of economic policies and development and a dynamic player in America's and the world's political and economic concert.



Desde el Sur. Visiones de Estados Unidos y Canadá desde América Latina a principios del siglo XXI, vol. 2.

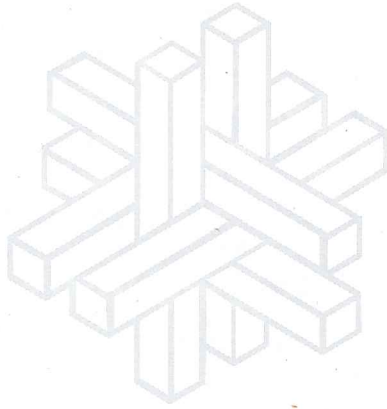
Paz Consuelo Márquez-Padilla,
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This book looks at relations between Latin America and the United States. Although national security subsumes bilateral agenda issues, reality demands observers look at other matters of continuing importance: migration and human rights, employment and productivity, international trade and labor, as well as resurfacing nativism in U.S. immigration policy.



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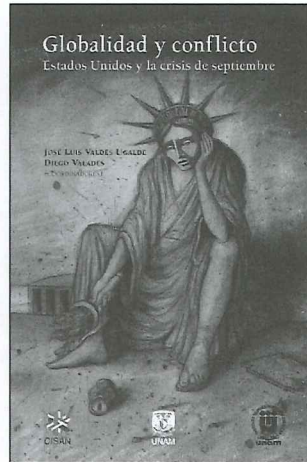
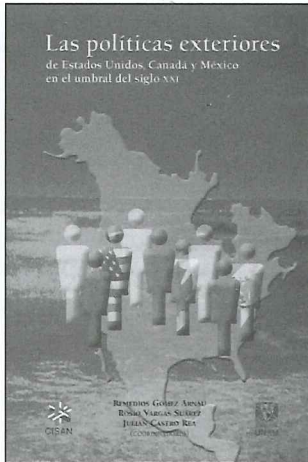
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p u b l i c a t i o n s

Las políticas exteriores de Estados Unidos, Canadá y México en el umbral del siglo XXI

Remedios Gómez Arnau, Rosío Vargas Suárez and Julian Castro Rea, comp.

Foreign policy design in North America has been reformulated with the beginning of the new century. The U.S. faces the choice of acting alone or through multilateral cooperation in matters of national security. Using the concept of "human security", the authors look at the perspectives for Canadian foreign policy. Mexico, for its part, is seen in light of the redefinition of its foreign policy, particularly vis-à-vis its multiple trade agreements.



Globalidad y conflicto. Estados Unidos y la crisis de septiembre

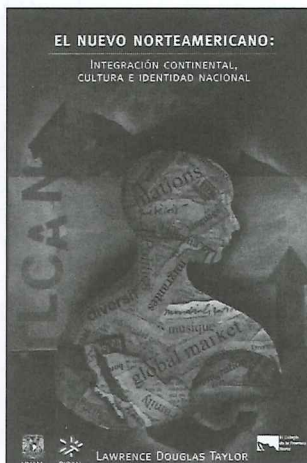
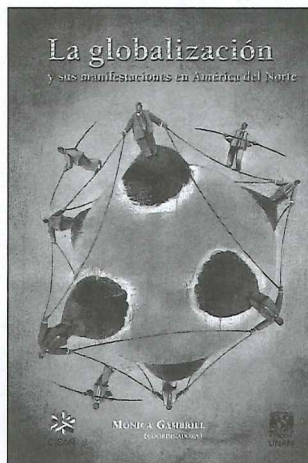
José Luis Valdés Ugalde and Diego Valadés, comp.

The events of September 11, 2001 have prompted the concepts of security and globalization to be posed in different ways and have given them new meaning. This book is the first Spanish-language academic publication in which specialists from different fields analyze these issues.

La globalización y sus manifestaciones en América del Norte

Mónica Gambrill, comp.

In light of the importance of globalization today, scholars from different countries have contributed articles to this book about issues that it affects: the economy, political power, NAFTA, the labor market, drug trafficking, the environment, the judicial branch of government and cultural industries.



El nuevo norteamericano: integración continental, cultura e identidad nacional

Lawrence Douglas Taylor

This book examines the implications of NAFTA and hemispheric integration for the cultural interaction among Canada, the United States and Mexico. It also ponders the demands and effects on these three countries whose future holds similar or greater challenges in the field of cultural unification.

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New Chicano Literature

Manuel Ramos

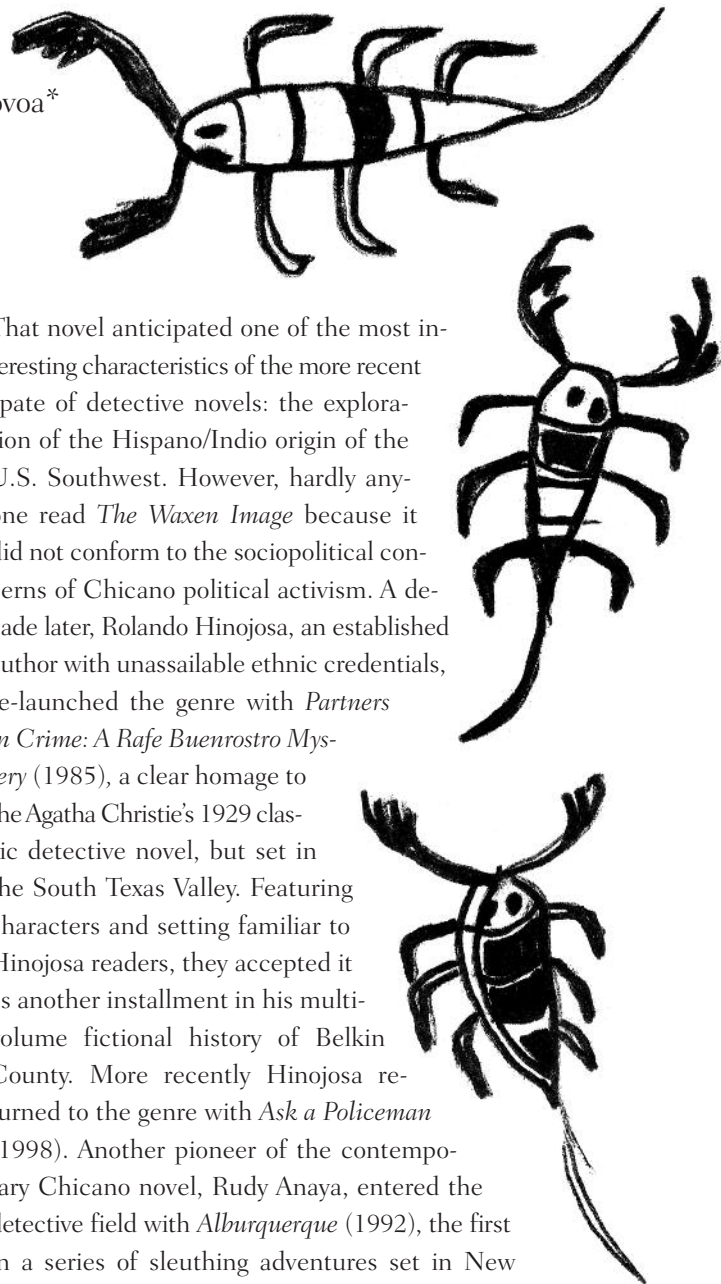
Bruce Novoa*

Marcus Embry, a most astute young critic of U.S. Latino literature, has insisted for the last few years that at this moment when old-style Chicano writing seems to have run its course, seeds of renovation can be found in the new boom in detective novels. About a decade ago, I presented a similar proposition to a group of European scholars, stating that Chicano authors were using the detective genre to investigate the social and ideological circumstances of their communities and in particular the history of the Chicano civil rights movement. They expressed misgivings, questioning if a formulaic genre like the detective novel could allow for serious commentary on socio-historical matters or even provide reliable cultural information. Though I assured them that in Latin America it already had done so, they remained unconvinced, especially since there was relatively little production in the genre by Chicanos at the time. Now, as Marcus Embry points out, we have no lack of titles by Chicano writers. The other question—whether detective writing can accommodate ideological commentary and provide cultural data—is still to be explored.

Before addressing that question, a little background may be appropriate. The mystery or crime novel is not an entirely new phenomenon in Chicano literature. When contemporary Chicano literature was starting to solidify itself in the 1970s, Rudy Apodaca published *The Waxen Image* (1977), a mystery novel with an international setting that ultimately focused on New Mexico in the search to resolve the disappearance of a main character.

That novel anticipated one of the most interesting characteristics of the more recent spate of detective novels: the exploration of the Hispano/Indio origin of the U.S. Southwest. However, hardly anyone read *The Waxen Image* because it did not conform to the sociopolitical concerns of Chicano political activism. A decade later, Rolando Hinojosa, an established author with unassailable ethnic credentials, re-launched the genre with *Partners in Crime: A Rafe Buenrostro Mystery* (1985), a clear homage to the Agatha Christie's 1929 classic detective novel, but set in the South Texas Valley. Featuring characters and setting familiar to Hinojosa readers, they accepted it as another installment in his multi-volume fictional history of Belkin County. More recently Hinojosa returned to the genre with *Ask a Policeman* (1998). Another pioneer of the contemporary Chicano novel, Rudy Anaya, entered the detective field with *Albuquerque* (1992), the first in a series of sleuthing adventures set in New Mexico. Significant as this context may be, the Chicano detective novel is more associated with newer and younger novelists.

To explore Chicano detective writing three names are essential: Michael Nava, Lucha Corpi and Manuel Ramos. Each has an impressive bibliography, each has created one or more distinc-



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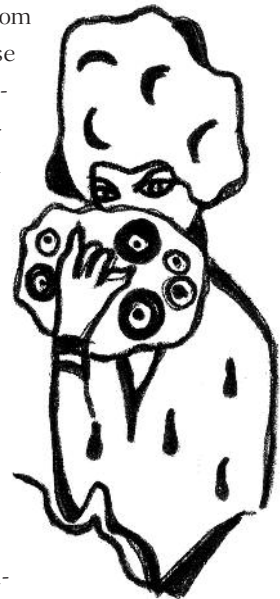
tive investigators replete with their own voice and life-style, each has staked out a milieu immediately associated with their novels, and each has achieved recognition within the genre with loyal readers who await new adventures. These three writers have mastered the technical craft of the genre, so their books do not read like momentary forays into mystery writing. Part of the pleasure derived from sleuthing texts is how they handle generic rules, another is to encounter a writer who respects those expectations while introducing innovations. Nava, Corpi and Ramos balance formula against innovation.

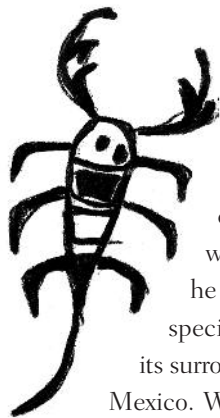
For me, Ramos, a native of Colorado, has created the most convincing total package. His favorite sleuth is Luis Montez, a classic *noire* down-and-outer, a middle-aged lawyer tottering on the edge of professional and personal failure. A blend of reluctant realist and sentimental soft touch, he is an easy mark for physically well-endowed women, especially if they are intelligent. Ramos' other protagonist, Danny "Moony" Mora, a full-fledged private investigator, is much harder edged than Montez, less sentimental, more calculating, and not plagued by Montez's self-effacing regrets. Where Montez's environment is endearingly chaotic and messy, Mora's is ordered and intentional. Yet despite themselves, both get swept into investigating violent crimes that threaten them and their intimate circle with death —just like the would-be screen writer of "Murder Movie," the story included in this issue. Naturally, survival depends on solving the case in time. And everywhere beautiful, sexy strangers stand —or lie— in their way. So much for fidelity to the demands of the genre.

Like his predecessors mentioned above, Ramos laces his plots with historical elements, providing readers with implicit commentary on Chicano cultural development. *The Ballad of Rocky Ruiz*, his first novel (Irvine Prize for Literature in 1992), reads like a response to a nagging question: why did the Chicano Movement fail? When a series

of murders forces Montez to reevaluate the 1960s killing of a student militant —metaphor for the death of idealism— he realizes that the accepted explanation was false. In a pattern repeated in subsequent works, Montez discovers corruption infecting the very heart of Chicanismo. The message is unavoidable: to survive, one must jettison naïve idealism and analyze the history of Chicano cultural nationalism and politics like a detective investigates a case, following the hard facts wherever they lead. In his latest novels Ramos includes the historical struggle over water rights dating back to the Mexican American war (*Brown-on-Brown*) and the present Mexican drug and illegal immigration trade (*Moony's Road to Hell*), although the latter also features yet another revelation of corruption within the 1960s movement similar to the *Rocky Ruiz* novel. By inserting historical materials or current social problems Ramos allows readers to consider them in summary fashion, like a sleuth might peruse the facts gathered for him by his diligent assistant. A pattern of struggle by the Mexican-American community emerges in which despite great odds it survives and even prospers. However, Ramos refreshingly avoids the simplistic binary of we/good versus they/evil. His sleuths find Chicanos on both sides of the equation, and at times it seems that the entire cast is Mexican American. In effect, some

of his worst villains are vatos from the old neighborhood. Worse still, others are powerful, respected, and even beloved community figures. While old guard Chicano activists produce nostalgic panegyrics to the movement, Ramos provides a much more realistic appraisal. Yet his protagonists were once, and still would like to be, idealists; they too yearn for that flash of optimism we called the 60s, but Ramos' plots keep confronting them with incontrovertible reminders of its betray-





al, much too often at the hands of people from their own ethnic community.

As Ramos interweaves historical and social observations with quickly paced plots, punctuated with the requisite violence and sex, he steadily provides glimpses of a specific site, the Denver metroplex and its surroundings that include northern New Mexico. Writing a series set in one location allows him to build up what anthropologists call a thick description of locale. The detective's eye for detail lends itself to rich documentation, but that eye here is always Chicano, the fibers of his intense weave tinted with an ethnic tonality new to the U.S. detective novel. Readers come to recognize Denver like a familiar landscape, experiencing at street level its rise into an international destination as well as a leading model for urban development over the last decades of the past century. This transformation into a world-class city coincided with the rise of its Chicano population into a major player in the city's life. It also coincided with the rise to prominence of the Mexican drug cartel, giving some of Ramos' novel an international dimension ripe with crime motifs. Denver becomes a space experienced through a Chicano lens.

While so much Chicano literature is still bogged down in the pretense that we are all poor, Ramos opens a window onto the burgeoning Chicano middle class. True, his plots often lead readers into low-life milieus with their picturesque clientele, but more often they move through the offices of the new institutional bureaucracy, from police to federal judges and everything between. Ramos' first novel portrayed the changing face of U.S. society by having an Italian police detective, Coangelo, retire, leaving the field open for a Chicano successor. The same novel featured a powerful Chicano judge as well as a brilliant female law student employed by one of the leading firms. Since then his books have featured an impressive list of well-placed, well-paid, university-trained professionals in power positions in the city. Ramos' sleuths move through a society in which Chicanos

are neither excluded from any level of society nor do they pretend to be uneducated or unsophisticated.

Marcus Embry likes to cite a passage from *Moony's Road to Hell* where Ramos describes his detective's bookcase, laden with well-read volumes. A few titles appear: "*The Silver Cloud Café. The Drunken Boat. . . y no se lo tragó la tierra. The Poet in New York. White Leg*". What does it mean for Chicano culture, Embry posits, that Ramos' detective stores modern, canonized classics by Rimbaud and Lorca amid three Chicano novels as if they were equals in the space of intellectual production? This is not the place to decipher the books as clues to the novel's outcome—which they are—just to point out Ramos' insistence that Chicano literature accepts no boundaries, no cultural stereotyping. As with the best examples of universalized art, while set in clearly identifiable places, with localized characters, the result is open and limitless. **MM**

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Murder Movie

by Manuel Ramos

“When I volunteered to help with the festival, I didn’t think it would mean driving people around. I’m not a chauffeur.”

“Quit complaining, Miguel. This is a big chance for you. You’re the one that wants to be in the movie business, no? The Latino Film Festival puts you right in the middle of the action with people who can help you. Don’t be stupid. Impress people with your commitment to the festival, to helping out. Mingle, talk to them so they know who you are. It could lead somewhere. What else you got going that you can’t spare one weekend to take care of some producers, directors and actors, and see free movies, too? Seize the day, pal.”

What Marie said made sense, of course, but I didn’t want to listen. She may have been a good friend, even a girlfriend once upon a time, and she may have managed to get a good job at Channel 7 in the news department, and she still may have looked real good all dressed up for work, but I thought she had done me wrong with this festival thing. When she told me she could get me on the volunteer list for the festival, I had jumped at the chance. I thought I could moderate some of the directors’ panels, or introduce a couple of the films, talk to Eddie Olmos or Andy Garcia about my screenplay and maybe entertain one of the cute Latina starlets in between screenings. That’s what I expected, that’s not what happened.

The day before anything official started, I had to pick up a few Hollywood wannabes at the airport, at some very strange hours I thought, then get them to the hotel, and squeeze in a few trips to dinner for groups of AIPs (almost important people). Then, on Friday, I waited for them at their hotel until they were good and ready, trucked them to the theater, waited around to drive them to the receptions, and then later back to the hotel. I was stuck up front in the limo, and my only interaction with my passengers was an occasional hello or thank you or hey, slow down, we don’t want to die in Denver. I deserved more respect

than that, even if I was only 25, but there was no one to complain to except Marie and she had grown tired of my “whiny act.”

I managed. That was my attitude. I could survive anywhere, do anything, if I had to. I kept a smile on my face although the silly uniform I had to wear was too damn hot for the Colorado springtime sunshine. I said yes sir and no ma’am, got headaches from the perfume and liquor breaths, and did not get any sleep that first night before I had to be back at it early Saturday morning and do it all over again.

By that night, I was dog tired and cranky. The day had been hot, the passengers had not been in good moods since they were all nervous about the audience reaction to their movies, and I had not made any meaningful connections with anybody. The job had been a bust and then it got worse when Marie called me on the car phone and begged me to do one more drive that night, after the last film. I argued but in the end I gave in because she promised to make it up to me and the way she said, “make it up to you” was enough to re-energize my tired bones and dormant libido.

I had agreed to drive a producer and his actress wife to a late dinner meeting with a group of local Hispanics (among my friends, Hispanics means Mexicans with money) who wanted to play Hollywood. The concept was enough to make me gag but I kept my smile as I waited in front of the hotel for my passengers.

She twirled through the revolving doors and I knew it was Mrs. Castillo immediately. Short red dress, bright red lipstick, a black top that had to be some kind of lingerie not quite covering her ample bosom and the sweetest accent I had heard since my cousin Cristina from Matamoros had stayed with us one summer and learned a few English words.

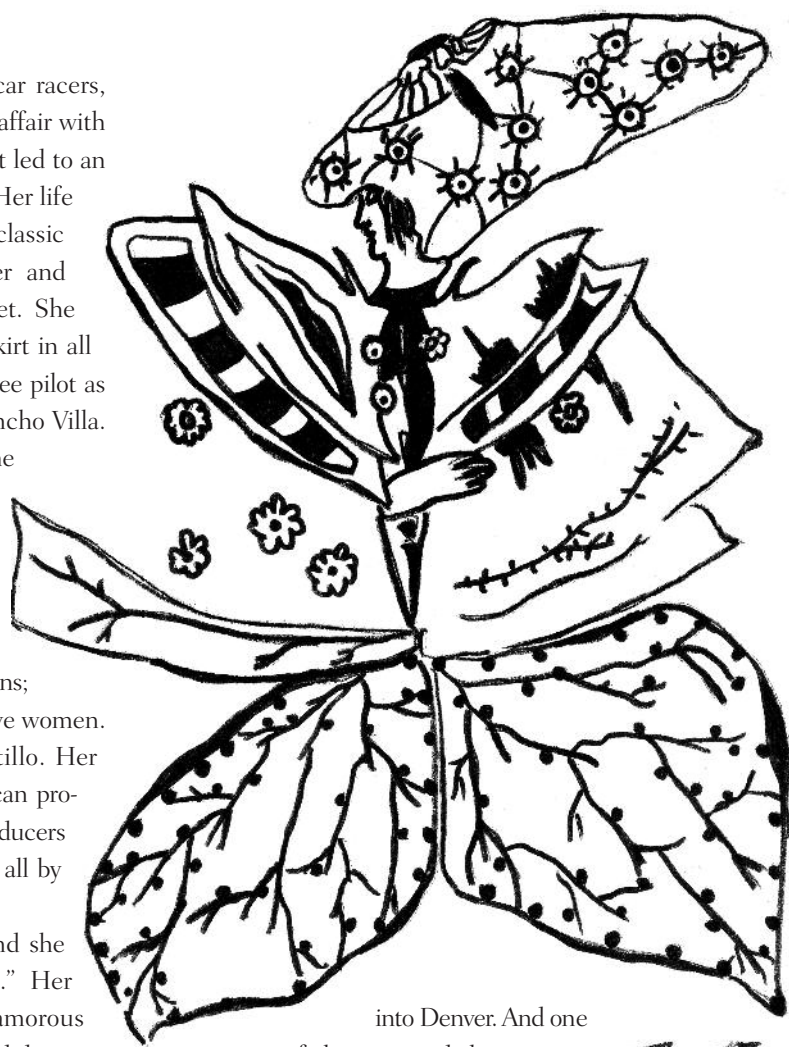
Debra Castillo used to be Dee Luna, the sexpot who had a decent career in Mexican B movies. The

plots of her flicks usually involved stock car racers, rodeo cowboys or serial killers. She had an affair with a Chicano senator from California, and that led to an appearance in a Robert Rodriguez project. Her life changed with that small part. There's one classic scene that produced a memorable poster and about a million downloads on the Internet. She stands in the desert, the wind lifting her skirt in all directions and she blows a kiss to the Yankee pilot as he takes off in his biplane to hunt down Pancho Villa. Her gringo lover loses control of the plane after Pancho has riddled it with Gatling gun fire, and the desperation in her eyes as she watches the plane spin in fiery descent was enough to get her more and better parts. In just a few years she had graced the cover of every magazine that catered to (1) movie fans; (2) Latinos; (3) men who like to ogle attractive women. She was the current Mrs. Reynaldo Castillo. Her husband was one of the few Cuban-American producers in Hollywood and one of the few producers of any heritage who could bankroll a movie all by himself, if he had to.

I opened the passenger door for her and she gave me a breathless, "Gracias, jovencito." Her entrance into the car was anything but glamorous and I had to help her with a polite push. I did get an eyeful of a pair of tanned thighs that would have made me stay for a double feature but she didn't seem to notice or care.

A few minutes later the husband stormed through the same revolving doors. He practically ran to the car and jumped in. I was closing the door when he grabbed it and jerked it shut. By the time I had made it to the driver's seat, they were in a full-fledged shouting match that even the massive body of the Lincoln could not contain. I spied on them in the rear view mirror but they were so intent on drowning out each other that they did not stop even when I pulled away from the curb. I did not need to talk to them anyway. I had my directions and I knew the address.

They were meeting the investor group at an expensive restaurant in the foothills about 30 miles away, and I had an hour to get them there. I had bitched about the drive to Marie, but she explained that the money people from Boulder didn't want to drive



into Denver. And one of them owned the restaurant.

An out-of-the-way place for a serious discussion about Latino movie-making in the brand new century—that's what Marie had told me when she filled me in on the details of my task.

I drove through the city streets to the interstate, cut to the Boulder Turnpike for several minutes and then off the highway onto a gravel road into the hills and the secluded nature reserve that surrounded the restaurant.

I thought I saw him slap her and I did see her break into tears at least twice. They finally stopped arguing about a mile from the restaurant when she tried to rearrange her makeup, without much luck.

I stopped the limo and opened the door for them but only he got out. He turned in her general direction and said, "Quit the games, Dee. I'm not doing this anymore. Either you come in now or you can find another way back to the hotel. Hell, you can find another way back to L.A."

I heard her answer: “¡Cabrón! ¡Déjame!”

Mr. Castillo must have understood that to mean that he would have to go the meeting by himself and he chugged off, mumbling under his breath.

I still held the door so I leaned in and said, “You okay? Anything I can do?”

She answered, “¿Habla español?”

I stammered, “Uh, lo siento. Por favor. I’m Chicano, pero, uh, I don’t speak Spanish very well.”

“That’s all right. I can manage in English. At least I think I can.” She coughed and I thought she was going to cry again.

“You sure you’re all right? Did he hurt you?”

“No. No. Not really. Not this time.”

I felt very strange feeling sorry for one of the most beautiful women in the world, whose makeup was smeared and whose dress kept inching up her legs and whose angry husband was less than 50 yards away in a high-powered meeting that could have determined my future. I wanted to be in that meeting. I wanted to pitch my script. It was the right audience: influential and wealthy Latinos who should want to hear from a young Chicano writer who had a story about murder and lust and revenge among the Hispanic middle class. It was a natural. A murder movie with a Latino slant. But I hadn’t been invited to that meeting so I had to be satisfied with soothing the very upset Mrs. Castillo.

Not that it was tough duty. Smeared makeup or not, she was easy on the eyes, as Bogart might have said in *The Big Sleep*, and I thought that I should at least try to calm her down.

“Has he hurt you before?”

She didn’t answer right away. She didn’t want to answer, I could see that, and that told me all I needed to know. The mighty Reynaldo Castillo beat up his wife.



“It’s not that important. The fights aren’t what I’m afraid of. That’s not it. I wish that was all.”

I shut the door, walked around the car and sat behind the steering wheel. I slid open the glass that separated the passengers from the driver and watched her for a few minutes. She seemed better, more in control.

I said, “If you don’t mind me asking, what is it? What are you afraid of?”

She hesitated again. It was difficult for her to speak but it wasn’t the language problem that was getting in her way.

Why should she trust me with the secrets of her heart, with the pain of a marriage that obviously hadn’t worked out? I was just the limo man, the driver, not even a real chauffeur, and she knew it and she had every reason to tell me to mind my own business.

She finally said, “One of Rey’s wives was killed, by a man who broke into their home. They never found the killer. Rey’s first wife disappeared after the divorce. She’s been missing for years. I think Rey had them both killed. It’s crazy, I know. But he’s a macho like from the old days, and he’s rich. Can’t bear to think that any woman would stand up to him, much less leave him. He thinks every woman wants his money. He’s mean, cruel. If I told you what he does, you wouldn’t believe it. No one believes it. He’s famous, generous, a leader of the community. I’m just a Mexican bimbo—I know that’s what they call me. No one listens to me. No one believes me.”

I wanted to reach over and hug her, tell her that I, for one, believed her, and that I would take her away right then and there to wherever she wanted to go. But, as I thought about what I would say, it sounded so stupid even to me that I could not dredge up the courage to say it to her. She started crying again and I listened and watched in helplessness. I shut the partition and gave her some privacy.

The meeting took a little bit more than an hour and he barely acknowledged her as he climbed in the car. I guess he forgot about making her catch another ride. He made several short calls with his cell phone then leaned back as though he wanted to sleep.

The drive started out quietly enough. I concentrated on the dark road because it had no street lights, homes or other evidence of human activity. We were on the edge of a slight rise in the hill that gave the appearance of a steep drop to the meadow below. The isolated stretch continued for only a few miles but it took my complete attention to keep the bulky limo on the narrow dirt strip. The return trip seemed longer than on the way in. My eyes aren't the best, especially at night, and in the hills, with only dust-covered headlights and dim moonlight to guide me, I was practically aiming the car by instinct and memory only. And I was burned out.

The gunshot echoed in the tight confines of the limo. I jerked and twisted the steering wheel. I thought someone from outside had shot at the car but when I turned to my passengers, I saw Castillo doubled over in pain, holding his shoulder. Blood seeped through his suit jacket. She cringed on the corner of the seat, crying, whispering incoherently.

"What the ...!"

I stopped the car and jumped out. Dust clouds floated around the car from my abrupt stop. I ran to the passenger side of the car, opened Castillo's door and stared at his wound. It looked bad but what did I know? Her slim fingers held a gun, gingerly, almost as though she were not touching it. I reached over her groaning husband and took the gun from her.

She said, "He tried to kill me. He was going to shoot me in this car, and you, too. I was trying to holler for you to stop, but he covered my mouth with his hand. I grabbed at anything I could and I must have somehow turned the gun. And then, I don't know how, the gun went off, and he shot himself." She sobbed, then repeated, "He tried to kill me."

I aimed the gun at him. He stopped squirming in the back seat long enough to see that I was now in charge.

He shouted at me although I was only a few inches from his face.

"¡Imbécil! Don't listen to her! She shot me. I'm the one bleeding! She had the gun, not me. You took the gun from her! Call the police. Oh-oh-oh."

I thought he was passing out.

I said, "She told me all about you. I will call the cops. Get out where I can keep an eye on you."

It took an eternity but he finally crawled out of the car. He was in obvious pain and the blood would not stop even though he gripped his shoulder with white knuckles.

"You've got to help me. I could bleed to death. There must be a first aid kit in this car. Get something that will stop the bleeding."

I waited for her to respond. She shook her head.

"Don't do anything he says. He's going to kill us. Let him rot here. Let's go. Let's get away while we can."

Castillo laughed and I thought that was the most unreal part of a very unreal night.

He said, "Dee, you're good. A better actress than anyone gives you credit for. What's your plan, baby? Get this kid to finish me off then you take care of him and claim that he tried to rob us? Is that it? Not bad.





But, it'll never work. You've got to get the gun back from this guy and I don't think that's going to happen. Right, kid?"

We stood along the edge of the headlight beams and I was having a hard time making out any details. He was moving so slowly that I knew it would take several minutes for him to reach the direct glare of the headlights. I had to watch the both of them at once. I held the gun on him but I tried

to keep her in my vision, too. It was all a jumble, a mass of confusion in my head. I had to think clearly.

He was right about one thing. She was an actress, and I had to remember that.

Castillo said, "Kid, I need help. I'm going to faint. You must do something. ¡Ayúdame, hombre! She's a witch. Watch her. Don't turn your back on her. See what she did to me."

She moved closer and I jerked the gun in her direction and waved her away from me. Then I quickly re-aimed the gun at the wounded man. I could not see their faces, and I realized that I was incredibly hot and that sweat was dripping in my eyes. I should have taken off the chauffeur's coat but it was too late for that.

She said, "Don't listen to him. Let's just leave him and go. You can call the police after we drive away. He's up to something."

I wiped my face with my free hand and I began to put it together. What she said did it for me. Her words clicked and my brain made all the necessary connections at once. Why wait to call the cops? Did she want to do something before the cops showed up? Maybe shoot me while my attention was diverted, then finish off her husband? He was the one bleeding, right? How had she managed to get the gun away from him in the first place? And why would he have a gun when he was going to a business meeting? She had to have had the gun all the time, in that fancy purse she had carried all night. She had played me, that was obvious. She was a beautiful woman, toying with a kid who had been dazzled by her cleavage and legs—her sexiness. I had almost fallen for it.

I pointed the gun at her.

I said, "Okay, enough. No one's going anywhere. I'll call the cops, and we'll wait for them to come and sort this out. You just stay there, please."

I motioned with the gun for her to stand still.

She bit her lower lip. She said, "Don't. You don't know what he's doing."

I shook my head because now I understood completely.

I said to Castillo, "Hand me your phone."

He said from between clenched teeth, "Certainly. Take it."

He moved slowly, pulling the phone from his suit coat pocket. I reached for the phone with my left hand and when I touched its plastic case I relaxed the hold on the gun in my right hand. I realized my fingers ached from holding the gun in a vise grip and I did not want to have any accidents. I was close to him, closer than I wanted to be but I had to get the phone. I paid more attention to dealing with the phone than to the man or the woman, or to the direction the gun was pointed. That's when he grabbed my jacket lapels with his blood-smeared left hand, jerked me forward and kicked me in the stomach. I felt dizzy, sick. I fell backwards and dropped the gun.

He picked it up and aimed it at me. I heard her scream. I lay on my back in the dirt, unable to catch my breath, the sweat on my skin suddenly ice cold. My lips quivered and almost everything disappeared—the woman in the red dress, the man bleeding all over his thousand dollar suit, the limo, the night. All I could see was the barrel of the gun, and it made me smile. The gun roared and I twitched but I still smiled. I should have seen it coming. The ending was just like my screenplay. **MM**



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Reviews

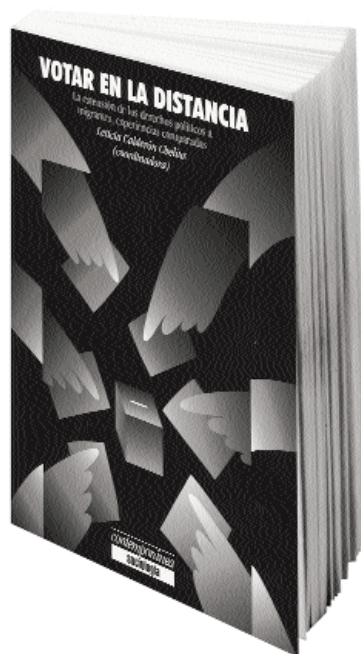
Votar en la distancia. La extensión de los derechos políticos a migrantes, experiencias comparadas

(Democracy in an Ever-Shrinking World
Immigrant Voting Rights Back Home)

Leticia Calderón Chelius, compiler

Instituto Dr. José María Luis Mora

Mexico City, 2003, 592 pp.



Strictly speaking, *Votar en la distancia*, compiled and coordinated by political sociologist Leticia Calderón Chelius, is an important and provocative anthology of essays that discuss the extension of voting rights to diasporas of 17 immigrant-sending countries across Latin America, as well as Spain, Portugal, Canada and the United States. The potential and sometimes pivotal participation of immigrants in the political culture of their home countries can take many forms but within the transition to and reinforcement of democracy prevalent in so many countries, the right to vote easily earns its place as the most prominent of political rights. While the majority of these Latin American immigrant communities are located in the United States, increasingly they also live in Canada, Europe and in Latin America itself.

The diversity of case studies eminently demonstrates that extending voting rights to citizen-migrants residing beyond the national boundaries of their home countries varies greatly, and is largely a product of each country's political

history and culture and tradition of emigration. The transition to democracy and the particular political culture that it engenders in each immigrant-sending society also determine the ease with which immigrants have access to electoral processes in their home countries. While the gamut of political rights extended to immigrants will undoubtedly continue to be discussed and implemented in both the sending and receiving countries, the focus on voting in elections back home will intensify as transnational networks reinforce migrant populations' roles in their countries of origin through social networks, economic support and political participation.

Calderón Chelius categorizes the essays into groups according to the status of voting rights for diasporas. The first group of essays discusses those Latin American countries that have legislated and actually held elections abroad for nationals living outside the country. Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Honduras and Peru have all taken particular care to reinforce political relationships with their diasporas as part of a process to rid themselves of military dictatorships and ins-

titute meaningful electoral processes. Whether the goal is to symbolically integrate political expatriates, encourage investment and other economic ties with emigrants, or simply to open bridges with particularly important communities abroad, these societies have decided to incorporate their diasporas into national political life. In the case of Colombia, emigrants can even participate in elections as candidates.

The following section focuses on Chile, the Dominican Republic and Mexico, significant but different immigrant-sending countries that have legally approved extending the vote to emigrants, but delays in regulations have postponed conducting elections abroad. Political transitions in each country and a widespread awareness of maturing communities living ultramontane have fostered a recognition that geographical distance has not prevented emigrants from being participants in hometown politics. The very particular circumstances of the exodus from Chile transformed the politically charged emigrant community into vociferous and effective critics of the military dictatorship in international arenas, thus creating an obligation to include them in Chilean national life when the democratic transition was realized. Intensively studied as a highly transnationalized immigrant community, the Dominicans living abroad present a different profile. While Dominicans abroad have developed many strategies of fostering transnational political networks, a government crisis in Santo Domingo in 1994 forced a re-evaluation of their demands for dual citizenship and the right to participate in elections back home. Finally, a highly documented essay of the status of extending the vote to the Mexican immigrant community abroad authored by Calderón Chelius herself is particularly valuable since the analysis details the controversy the discussion has generated in Mexico and places the issue within the political chess game of the party system.

The ensuing section studies those immigrant sending countries that have not addressed the issue of extending voting rights to citizens living

outside national boundaries. While Salvadorans and Paraguayans living abroad have already openly demanded the right to vote in elections in their home countries, Uruguayan and Guatemalan emigrants are just now reaching a consensus that they also deserve the legislated right to vote in elections back home. The governments of these countries have not yet taken official positions regarding extending the vote to the citizens living abroad but organizations of each corresponding migrant community are already raising awareness within the diaspora and often demanding of the home governments that they be included in elections. El Salvador has already

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recognized the contributions that emigrants have made to their home country, although sectors of both Paraguay and Uruguay are extremely reluctant to include the diaspora in the political scene back home.

Finally, case studies outside of Latin America reflect strategies useful for comparison. Both Spain and Portugal extended the right to vote to emigrants living outside national boundaries during the 1970s as part of complicated political processes to move out from under the shadows of longstanding dictatorships toward democratic, participatory forms of government. Both societies openly recognized that emigration was largely a response to political repression; extending political rights to emigrants was a logical consequence of implementing a broadly-based participatory form of government. While the Spanish emigrant population is not large, some immigrant communities with regional attachments (Gallegos in

Buenos Aires, e.g.) acquire significance in voting abroad. However, the longstanding migratory tradition of Portugal means that today 40 percent of its citizens reside beyond its national boundaries, although Portuguese elections suffer from high abstentionism. Spanish and Portuguese emigrants can vote by sending their ballot through the mail.

The final section of the book treats the cases of Canada and the United States, countries that routinely incorporate the votes of citizens abroad through "absentee voting." Both countries explored early the possibilities of seeking to include the votes of military personnel stationed away from their homes; interestingly Canada also included the Bluebirds, nurses stationed in Europe during World War I. Experiences of both countries showed that votes cast outside of electoral districts, be it nationally or internationally, would be no problem. Indeed, by the 1970s, the United States had incorporated absentee voting for those outside of their official electoral districts, or temporarily or permanently abroad. Concurrently, Canada legislated that Canadian citizens who had voted in the elections of another country, could still vote in Canadian elections, regardless of their residence, and later defined the right to vote as universal for people living outside their electoral districts. Incorporating absentee voting has not challenged the political cultures of either Canada or the United States,

but has expanded the voting franchise in efforts to respect the spirit of democracy.

Since the authors hail from many countries and disciplines, the studies use many perspectives and sources of information to present the data regarding each country, many with extensive bibliographies. Moreover, each section also includes useful basic statistical data about population, voters and percentage of the population actually living abroad. Chelius Calderón opens the volume with an extensive analytical essay about the short-term and long-term significance of studying the electoral systems of immigrant-sending countries, and the processes through which they evolve to include emigrants or not on their voters' lists.

In conclusion, *Votar en la distancia* fills voids in many areas of studies. Students of Latin America, elections, political science, acculturation and migration will all find useful information not easily available in other formats, unique in presentation and practical in application. Since the question of extending voting rights to emigrant communities is evolving quickly, one would only wish that Calderón Chelius would repeat the study in 10 years to ascertain the future electoral relationship between body politic and the corresponding diasporas.

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East L.A. Historia de un barrio
 (East L.A. History of a Neighborhood)
 Ricardo Romo
 CISAN/Coordinación
 de Humanidades/CEPE
 Mexico City, 2003, 280 pp.

Practically all Mexicans have or have had a relative, friend or at least an acquaintance

living in Los Angeles, California. Most probably, they lived in East Los Angeles, "the barrio." Of course, this is not mere chance.

As the respective histories of their neighboring countries converged, Mexicans and Americans had their most fruitful mis-encounter during the first three decades of the twentieth century, until along the banks of the Los Angeles River, the neighborhood that is today home to almost 2 mil-

lion Mexican Americans was formed, the birthplace of the Chicano cultural movement.

Los Angeles was founded almost as a border outpost in 1781 by a group of pioneers from northern Mexico. With the Guadalupe-Hidalgo Treaty of 1848, which turned it into a U.S. city, it was almost inevitable that its Mexican founders were put in a disadvantageous position which, with the passing of the years, ended up by becoming outright racial segregation. At the end of the nineteenth century, massive immigration linked to the gold fever, which attracted Chinese, Jews, Russians and Italians, concentrated an unstoppable wave of Mexican immigrants

The book looks at questions such as the growth and development of the Mexican barrio, the labor market, residential segregation and the social experiences of Mexican immigrants in Los Angeles in the 1920s.

around the main plaza, which came to be known as Sonoratown or Little Mexico. This was the case until World War I. Turned into one of the several ethnic communities that fostered the city's spectacular economic transformation—between 1900 and 1930, Los Angeles went from being a town of 100,000 to a metropolis of more than a million inhabitants—Mexican residents there were caught up in a contradictory dynamic: on the one hand they were indispensable for filling the labor vacuum created by the lack of local and immigrant workers; and, at the same time, in the best of cases, they were ignored or relegated by government policies or, worse yet, they were hit by the consequences of the chauvinist image of them (“They’re lazy, tricky and inclined to violence.”). In less than a century, they had become the targets of anti-foreigner campaigns in the town that had been founded by their direct ancestors.

By 1920, physically displaced by industrial and commercial capital and thanks to the develop-

ment of urban transportation, 100,000 Mexicans who had previously crossed the Rio Grande in search of better living conditions, crossed this other river to avoid growing racial tension in what we could consider an act of re-foundation. That is the spirit with which the East Los Angeles barrio emerged: as a second capital for these Mexicans abroad.

The history of Los Angeles, apparently of little interest to historians because it is a relatively new city, is to a great extent the history of its ethnic communities. However, in an attempt to negate the unremitting presence of Mexicans in L.A., Americans have preferred to research Mexicans in Mexico much more than those residing in their own territory. As a result, there are very few studies about Mexican neighborhoods in the United States, and those that do exist deal with them as though they were temporary, unassimilated residents in the mode of a ghetto: in summary, as a marginal, incapable social group.

Ricardo Romo tells us all this in his essay *East Los Angeles. Historia de un barrio*, which places things in their proper perspective by showing how Mexicans adapted to the explosive process of industrialization without losing either their language or their customs. This is how they ended up forming the largest Mexican community in the United States: an authentic city within the city, a metropolis inside a megalopolis.

The book looks at questions such as the growth and development of the Mexican barrio, how Mexicans fare in the labor market, the problems associated with residential segregation and the social and educational experiences of Mexican immigrants in Los Angeles in the 1920s. But, importantly, it returns to us the profound significance of this unstoppable migratory flow that, from the beginning of the last century, is a kind of peaceful “reconquest.” Compulsory reading.

Eunice Cortés

**Sociologist, psychoanalyst
and writer**



Alex Rubio