

OUR VOICE

The election campaign in the United States has forced many actors close to and partners of that country to express their preferences more directly than at other times in the recent past. Aside from the issue of the Iraq war—which seems to have resuscitated after Senator Hillary Clinton’s criticisms of President Bush on the fifth anniversary of that unfortunate bellicose adventure that has Washington turned upside down—central domestic issues like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and migration have had a decided effect on the debate. This has forced the three contenders still occupying the political arena to take what turned out to be contradictory positions on them on several occasions.

This is mainly the case of the Democrats. Both Senator Clinton and Senator Obama have criticized NAFTA and offered their constituencies the possibility of renewing or even canceling it. Obama himself had to reconsider his position after it leaked that his campaign staff had offered the Canadians assurances that he had no plans to negatively affect the treaty, and that it was just a matter for domestic consumption, for which it was a good idea to have a double discourse. This caused some resentment in Mexican circles and a big fuss among Democrats, to the point that Senator Clinton took advantage of the moment to launch harsh criticisms against her adversary. These certainly did great damage and probably were the cause of Obama’s losing Ohio and Texas, two states sensitive to the issue of regional integration and free trade.

Clinton, for her part, also for purely electoral reasons, has not been exempt from excesses in this kind of double discourse and has proposed a review of NAFTA to see whether it has influenced job losses and other misfortunes currently plaguing the U.S. economy. We know, however, that these calamities are linked to other more serious problems like China’s new role in the world economy and the industrial reengineering the U.S. economy is undergoing. Outsourcing is by no means something caused by the treaty with Mexico and Canada. Its origins are to be found elsewhere, and any economic advisor is perfectly aware of that.

While Senator John McCain has been more cautious—and everyone knows that he has already risked a great deal *vis-à-vis* the extreme right wing of his party by putting forward a “liberal” position on the issue of migration—he will definitely have to re-address the matter of NAFTA in the course of his campaign. This will have to be done regardless of which of the two Democratic hopefuls finally gets the nomination, given that both of them have turned out to be the most protectionist of the U.S. political establishment’s protectionists.

At bottom, it is all about using these issues to come out of this process in the best shape possible with an eye to the White House. Both free trade and migration are part of a phenomenon the United States has been experiencing, mainly with Mexico, for almost two decades now. It will not be resolved by canceling the agreement or by building fences along the border. It will be solved by formulating other kinds of policies toward the South, policies that assume that Mexico is a trustworthy neighbor to which better conditions should be offered so that its process of insertion in regional and inter-regional markets includes appropriate levels of prosperity, both urgent and necessary for preserving the national security of the United States itself and its borders.

Any candidate who refers to these issues lightly or puts forward a double discourse will lose the trust of his/her Canadian and Mexican counterparts in dialogue, and also very probably the Latino vote, particularly the Mexican one, today so valuable for winning a presidential election.

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Our “United States Affairs” section includes an article by analyst Leonardo Curzio, about what the current U.S. electoral process means not only for the stability of our neighbor to the north, but for the world. This process has been one of the most interesting and intense in many decades from all vantage points, including Mexico’s.

The candidates have also focused their campaigns on the economy, agreeing on a critique of the outgoing administration’s disastrous performance. In our “Economy” section, Elisa Dávalos offers our readers a contribution that goes a long way toward explaining the context of these problems, focusing on the pro-

found causes of de-industrialization in the United States and its effects in terms of decreasing employment.

In this issue, we once again present several views of Mexico's institutional transformations, dedicating most of the articles in our "Politics" and "Society" sections to the topic. We begin with an article by political analyst Fernando Dworak explaining the reasons behind the repeated failures in the last two decades of the attempts to implement a broad, thorough reform of the state. Electoral expert Carlos González offers us a reflection about the most recent electoral reform, focusing on several of the most potentially controversial points like what he calls the "poisoned apples" given to the Federal Electoral Institute: its exclusive control of party access to the media and of filing legal complaints against what it considers smear campaigns. The analysis continues as political scientist Javier Aguilar García writes about labor legislation reform, centered on greater flexibility on the job, actually a move toward individual negotiation of working conditions instead of collective bargaining. This is a proposal that has not passed despite repeated attempts over the last 20 years. Will Felipe Calderón manage it? Mexico's criminal justice system is also immersed in change. Two eminent jurists, Miguel Carbonnel and Enrique Ochoa Reza, offer us their diagnosis, arguing that greater, more structural reforms than those recently approved are needed to overcome the 99 percent impunity rate for crimes in the country. Health care is changing through what are generically known as "anti-tobacco laws". To better understand the reasons behind these new laws, Daniel Tapia offers us a detailed panorama of tobacco use in Mexico, its consequences for the health care system and the public policies needed to fight it.

Globalization has different effects in each of the regional blocs that it has spawned, even though some are common to all. In "Global Issues," researcher Ariadna Estévez looks more closely at its impact on human rights, particularly with regard to growing migration. She emphasizes the need to move toward universal citizenship to guarantee the rights emerging from the new global reality. Academic Camelia Nicoleta Tigau delves into another aspect of the global village: rich nations' food aid policies toward poor nations. Specifically, she covers USAID, whose programs are far from disinterested and altruistic.

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"Art and Culture" dedicates its pages to three different ways of understanding art. We start off with the photography of Juan San Juan, who captures ordinary fragments of Mexico City, and then digitally "intervenes" in them, turning them into new manifestations of urban art. On the other extreme of the spectrum, we find painter Gregorio Mendez, whose canvases express a longing to stop time, to bar progress from invading the scene and the traditions that inspire him. Lastly, we include an example of the influence that social dynamics have on art, even on its most traditional forms, like painting on *amate* bark paper. Prompted by necessity, the folk artists we present have emigrated to the United States, and their new experiences as migrants are what they paint about in a form of artistic expression that refuses to die.

"The Splendor of Mexico" returns to Campeche, bringing our readers the second part of an article about the different architectural styles of the Mayan peoples. That article, together with another about the astronomical and archaeological importance of the constructions in the city of Edzná, shows us why the obsession with Mayan culture remains alive. We also look at a unique form of hand-made crafts from Campeche: the production of items from jipi palm leaves, particularly hats, whose elegance has made them very popular.

"Museums" looks this time at the Museum of Mayan Architectural, in the city of Campeche, with its magnificent samples of Mayan art from different parts of the state.

The phrase "102 years of generosity" could easily be used to describe the life of Don Andrés Henestrosa. In homage to this giant of Mexican literature and culture, we have dedicated to him our "In Memoriam" and "Literature" sections. We have included two essays/testimonies about his extraordinary body of literary work and his renowned bonhomie by award-winning writer Silvia Molina and researcher Dolores González Casanova. Henestrosa's literature can be defined as his ability to reveal world views and differences in a way that is both tender and surprising, particularly when they share his own indigenous roots. As examples, we have published two of his short stories here.

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