

OUR VOICE

The global economic crisis has affected the three countries of North America differently: unemployment in Mexico is estimated at 6.3 percent; in the United States, 9.5 percent; and in Canada, 8.4 percent. But the gravity of the overall problems Mexicans face points to increasing asymmetry in relations with our trade partners.

This becomes clear if we note that, in addition to the indicators on violence, growing poverty and exclusion, the country has to deal with errors in political leadership, a fiscal reform for 2010 that threatens to be unpopular and low confidence levels among consumers. The immediate consequences of all this is uncertainty among the population, with pessimism prevailing in society.

Plagued by a myriad of contradictions, Mexico's political actors, beginning with President Calderón himself and followed by members of Congress and the political parties, show signs of continuing to concentrate on a short-term vision.

In this context, the scenario of a country where the figure of citizen has not yet consolidated as the center of the democratic regimen is dramatic. This can be seen in the gap between the citizenry and its representatives.

Increases in the value-added and income taxes that will tend to hit the middle and working classes the most continue to lack any accompanying guarantees that the revenues will be used efficiently and transparently for society. This is particularly the case if they are examined in light of the criteria of austerity set out for earmarking resources for priorities like public higher education, compared to the untouchable, sky-high budget items still reserved for political parties, whose interests continue to center on maintaining the privileges guaranteeing them their quota of power.

Amidst all this, it should be emphasized that the National Autonomous University of Mexico was recently awarded the 2009 Prince of Asturias Prize for Communications and the Humanities for its contributions to culture, science and the arts down through its history. Naturally, this has had an enormous impact on the education of hundreds of generations of young people of different nationalities, enabling many of them to raise their social standing. But, the freedom of thought and expression that the university represented—and particularly in the case of exiled Spanish intellectuals who were given a place to work and thrive—has also provided the opportunity for a renewal of universal thought.

This international prize comes at the best possible moment. In the midst of the unease prevailing in the country, it reminds us that the UNAM is essentially an institution that belongs to the people of Mexico. It is thanks to their endeavors that our institution continues to be vibrant and look to the future, maintaining its vocation of strengthening humanistic, liberal, democratic values.

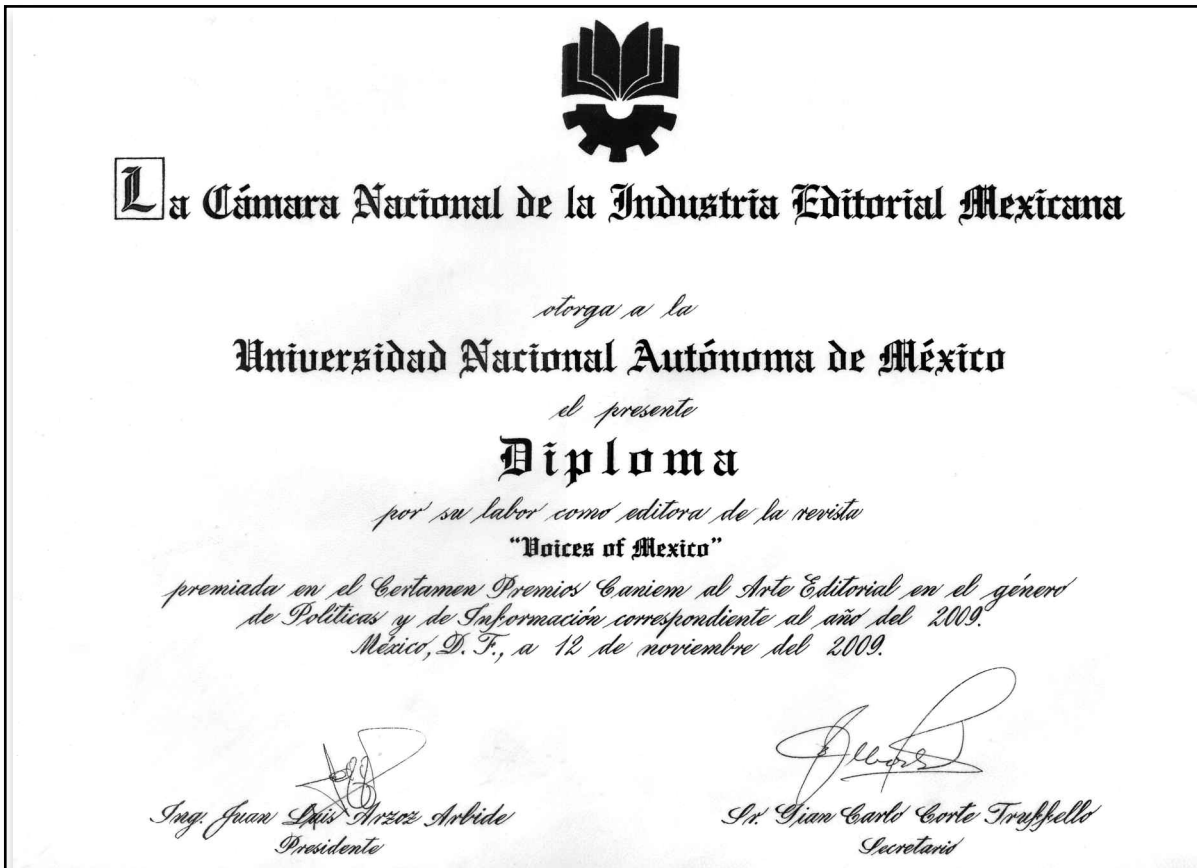
The university community, today made up of more than 35,000 academics and 306,000 students, reminds us that our mission in the information and knowledge age is not only to commit ourselves to excellence in developing our particular spheres of

action, but also to make access to high levels of specialization a right within the reach of all those convinced that it is vital to passionately dedicate their lives to teaching and research. This transcends the current trends of privatizing knowledge promoted by a globalization model that prioritizes the few.

From the work space we share as CISAN researchers, where last September we went through the statutory change in leadership, we will make all due efforts to fully explore the reality of this “new” North America. Our guiding principle will be the fact that building the future involves recognizing optimism as an effort of will.

I cannot conclude without expressing my satisfaction at the fact that in 2009 *Voices of Mexico* has once again been awarded the prize by the National Chamber of the Publishing Industry (Caniem) in the category of political and general information magazines. This distinction encourages and motivates us to continue making greater and greater efforts every day in our task of disseminating among the English-speaking public some of the most transcendental issues in Mexico and the region it is part of through the pens of many of our best voices.

Silvia Núñez-García



The Mexican National Chamber of the Publishing Industry confers this diploma on the National Autonomous University of Mexico for its work as the publisher of the magazine *Voices of Mexico*, awarded the Caniem Prize for Publishing in the category of Political and General Information for the year 2009. Mexico City, November 12, 2009.