

OUR VOICE

September seems to have arrived in Mexico more quickly in 2010 than in previous years. Although most of us in Mexico traditionally celebrate el grito or the “cry of independence,” whether by participating in popular verbenas (street festivities), with friends or with family, there were immense expectations throughout the country for this year’s celebrations of two centuries of the country’s independence.

It is clear that despite the increasing violence in our country, Mexicans demonstrated their patriotism, and were able to put aside their apathy and even their fears. However, the festivities were accompanied by severe criticism of the excessive spending these activities signified. The federal government alone spent 2.9 billion pesos (about 223 million USD dollars), and together with the disorganization and particularly the failure to complete a number of monumental public works designed precisely to enhance the memory of this bicentennial, these elements remain as the evidence of the culmination of another cycle of independence.

The context in which this commemoration took place revealed a number of circumstances that are important to mention. First of all, for a million Mexicans living in 14 of the country’s municipalities, official festivities were cancelled due to the climate of insecurity. In addition it was reaffirmed that the country continues to be incapable of breaking with its characteristic macrocephaly, favoring Mexico City above the rest of the nation’s territory, since the quality and spectacular nature of the fiestas were confined to the great metropolis. There was a failure to share these festivities more equitably —if not with each and every state— at least with the major geographical regions.

These comments are aimed particularly at bringing the attention of our readers to the section in this issue entitled “One Hundred Years of History,” in which an outstanding group of specialists offer us a panoramic view of Mexico’s historic transformation from 1810 to 1917. Identifying its decisive stages from the fight for Independence to the final moments of the Mexican Revolution, the authors speak of the struggle waged by a nation that never loses sight of its past, while looking ahead to its future.

Also, in our “Special Section” we invite you to review the sequence of articles representing an unprecedented collaboration by a well-established group of distinguished scholars from Mexico and the United States. Those of us participating assumed the task of analyzing the serious implications from the implementation of one of the most severe and controversial state laws for halting undocumented immigration: Law SB 1070, known as the “Arizona Law.”

Recognizing the complexity of the migration phenomenon between the two countries, our reflection is multidisciplinary and focuses on its origins, its many facets, and its consequences on both sides of the border. It has been especially important to acknowledge that the observations made by each of us participating as authors were the result of a genuine transnational exercise. This experience has led to the conviction that in order to bring the migration debate out of its stalemate, the formula used cannot be unilateral in nature. This type of collaboration among scholars must consequently take place not only on an ongoing basis, but must be aimed at seeking shared solutions.

On another topic, we believe that if we failed to acknowledge the loss of one of Mexico's great voices, we would not be true to our magazine's mission. The voice of writer Carlos Monsiváis ceased to be heard as of this past June.

Recognized as a chronicler, journalist and political activist since the years of his youth, he belonged to the generation of Mexico's 1968 student movement. Characterized by his firm convictions, he became an obligatory point of reference as a critic with a profound knowledge of Mexican politics, but also due to his passion for the manifestations of our popular urban culture. His exceptional characteristic was his sense of humor, accompanied by a unique sense of irony in his use of the language. In one of his texts, now-absent Carlos Monsiváis wrote: "And I saw an open door, and I went in, and I heard archangelical sounds...and I saw Mexico City." Today we acknowledge that even though the door has been closed, all of Mexico will continue to experience and observe through his eyes for many years to come.

I will conclude by recapitulating the two sections of this issue addressed at the beginning of this editorial, on the celebration of our country's history, and on the dilemma represented by migration between Mexico and the United States. It is enough to concur with something written by polish journalist Ryszard Kapuściński in the sense that if we live in a world of exacerbated nationalisms, we limit ourselves to perpetually remain strangers, since we are left without a name, an age or a profession.

Rejecting such nationalisms is thus a lesson that can lead us to a mature civic attitude in which all of us can demonstrate our capacity to re-route our destiny toward a constructive horizon.

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