

The Grinch Steals Christmas for Centro Aztlan

Although members of Centro hoped to present its most recent project to the public this Friday, the grinch had other plans.

The plan was to show the original film



José and Blas find Santa Suit

"The Wondrous Santa Suit" with a premiere showing but because of technical problems, plans were postponed for its release rescheduled for next Friday December 29th. The film will be shown at Joel's Rio Grande at 7:30 and 9:30 at night.

The film is based on the short story written by Bidal Aguero "El Traje de

Santo Claus" which tells of the plight of a poor family trying to make the best of Christmas for their 3 children. Jose played by Jaime Ponce is a garbage collector who gets the idea of looking through trash cans for gifts for their children. He finds a bicycle for Sergio played by seven year old Sergio Aguilar and a buggy which he converts into a play car for Marisol played by 10 year old Marisol Aguero. The third child "Teresita" played by 8 year old, Mariah Duarte suffers of a dysfunction called autism and the father is bewildered as to what type of gift she would like due to the fact that the only thing she ever plays with is a jar top which she constantly spins.

The father finds a brand new spinning top that would be the perfect gift but has promised to his boss played by Olga

Riojas-Aguero that he would turn in any toy that seems to be new or that it was thrown away by mistake. Jose is caught between keeping the gift for his daughter or turn it in to the boss.

Other actors include Marra Vaughn as the mother Matilde, Eric Strong as the man in the big house, Bidal Aguero as Blas the compadre and co-worker of Jose and Bea Narvaiz as the nurse. The original theme song for the film "The Miracle of Faith" was written and sung by Chris Molina with music by Eduardo.

Admission to the premiere at 7:30, which features dinner, drinks and the movie, will be \$20 per person. The 9:30 showing of the movie is \$5 for adults, students and seniors \$2.50 with children under 6 free. Interested persons can call 763-3841 for more information.



José finds perfect

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News Briefs

Latinos More Educated, But Still Lag Behind

The U.S. Census estimates that the educational levels of all American adults increased, though Latinos still acquire high school and college degrees at lower rates.

Nationally, U.S. Census data for the year 1999 shows that 57 percent of Hispanic adults 25 years or older have received at least a high school diploma, an improvement from 51 percent in 1990 and 46 percent in 1983.

Still, Hispanic educational levels lag drastically behind that of white Americans and African Americans. Close to 90 percent of non-Hispanic whites graduated from high school, while 79 percent of non-Hispanic blacks at least 25 years old have at least a high school diploma. Nationally, 26 percent of those age 25 and older have graduated from college, a percentage slightly higher than 1990 census estimates.

These figures do not include 2000 Census figures. According to the U.S. Census, increased funding and targeted marketing efforts increased the final response rate to 67, slightly up from 1990's 64 percent rate and far exceeding the Census's expected response rate of 61 percent.

Oath Waiver Eases Citizenship Requirement for Disabled Immigrants

Earlier this week, U.S. President Bill Clinton signed a measure that allows citizenship applicants with certain severe disabilities to become naturalized without taking the oath of allegiance to the United States.

The measure, sponsored by U.S. Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) and Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT) will allow the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to grant a waiver to an estimated population of about 1,000 immigrants a year whose disabilities render them unable to understand or communicate an understanding of the meaning of the oath.

The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund commended those associated with the law, including the bill's sponsors.

"We applaud U.S. Rep. Ros-Lehtinen and Senator Hatch for their leadership and for recognizing that a change in law was needed to help a number of immigrants whose disabilities prevent them from demonstrating their understanding of the naturalization oath," said NALEO Educational Fund Executive Director Arturo Vargas. "We welcome this measure as a positive step toward removing barriers and improving the process for those immigrants who are attempting to realize their dream of United States citizenship."

In a statement released Monday, NALEO officials said applauded the INS for recognizing the small "but significant problem in the law that faces immigrants with such diseases as Alzheimer's, cerebral palsy, Down's syndrome or autism."

"While the INS could waive citizenship requirements for citizenship applicants to pass history and English tests, they were unable to waive the requirement for the oath," Mr. Vargas added. "This legislation is a common sense approach which will allow the INS to do its job more effectively and provide better service to applicants with disabilities."

NALEO, a national non-profit, non-partisan organization whose constituency includes the more than 5,400 Latino elected and appointed officials nationwide, empowers Latinos to participate fully in the American political process, from citizenship to public service.

School of the Americas Only Closes in Name

By Elbert Garcia

The controversial School of the Americas, criticized as a training ground for Latin American dictators, assassins, and human rights abusers, went through the first face of an overhaul Friday, officially closing its doors Friday morning after 54 years of existence at Fort Benning, Georgia.

However, the school will re-open January under a new name, "The Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation," and with a more focused mission of promoting civilian control of the military and respect for human rights.

Secretary of the Army, Louis Caldera, has said the new school would be "forward-looking" and more appropriate to the needs of Latin American countries.

"It's not going to be oriented toward the Cold War challenges of the past that are the thing people have criticized about the school," Caldera told the Inside Army magazine. "It will be oriented toward the security challenges of the future for the countries of Latin America: strengthening democracy, fighting drug trafficking, responding to natural disasters, building regional security and cooperation."

However, opponents of the school have said the changes will only be cosmetic.

"We see this as cosmetic," Fr. Ray Bourgeois, a co-founder of School of the Americas

Watch, said last month. "It's like taking a bottle of poison and writing 'penicillin' on it."

Getting off to a fresh start

Army officials have made no secret of the name change, hoping that the cosmetic changes will erase some of the institutions negative publicity.

The plan was officially put into effect last spring by a 214 to 204 margin in the US House of Representatives. A bi-partisan amendment by Rep. Joseph Moakley (D-MA), Rep. Joseph Scarborough (R-FL) and Tom Campbell (R-CA) that would have closed halted the opening until a congressional task force conducted an investigation into the effect of US military training on the human rights performance of Latin American soldiers was defeated.

Although Congress has affirmed support a school that "enhance military professionalism and respect for democratic values throughout Latin America," the House Armed Services Committee has acknowledges the ongoing criticism of the school.

"The committee is aware of persistent concerns that the School of the Americas does not focus sufficient classroom attention upon critical issues," the committee said in a recent report. "While the committee believes that these concerns are unfounded, the committee recognizes the need to implement fundamental changes to the School of the Americas to ensure that its student curriculum is properly structured."

Critics believe that the SOA training has contributed to human rights atrocities in Latin America and point to a United Nations Truth Commission report that implicated 19 SOA alumni in the November 16, 1989 "execution style" killing of six Jesuit priests in El Salvador killing by 26 Salvadoran officers.

Last month an estimated 5,000 people participated the annual protests that have marketed the killings. Approximately 1,700 protesters, including actor Martin Sheen, were arrested after they marched through the school's gates and demanded that the facility be shut down.

Although military officials deny any responsibility for abuses by its alumni, a 1996 report by President Bill Clinton's Intelligence Oversight Board (IOB), charged with investigating excesses and abuses by the US intelligence community found that the school "used improper instruction materials in training Latin American officers from 1982 to 1991."

The IOB Board, which included some former military personnel, also stated that some passages in some of these materials "appeared to condone practices such as execution of guerillas, extortion, physical abuse, coercion, and false imprisonment."

However, some think that the criticism is underserved. "It is true that USARSA is a hierarchical, undemocratic, male-dominated organization of mostly politically conservative folks. But the school welcomed me, an outspoken feminist, socialist, Latin American activist, because when it comes to human rights, we are on the same side," wrote Amelia Simpson in a November 17 editorial published in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

"El Respeto al Derecho Ajeno es La Paz."
"Respect for the Rights of Others Is Peace"
Lic. Benito Juarez

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Y Nacio un Bebe

Para Ser Un Salvador

Fue un parto, si se quiere como todos los partos. La madre era joven y sana. El esposo estaba ahí para animarla, consolarla el sudor y las lagrimas. El embarazo habia sido normal, y el bebe, venia sano, hermoso, perfecto.

El lugar del nacimiento no parecia, quiza, pesebre calentado por el aliento de los bueyes y la lana de las ovejas y alumbrado por una estrella nueva que habia aparecido en el cielo de Judea.

Asi nacio Jesucristo. Humanamente hablando, uno de los nacimientos mas ignorados, pobres y humildes. Divinamente hablando, el mas grande de todos los nacimientos. Porque Jesus, que nacio en un pesebre, de padres humanos sumamente pobres, es el Salvador, Senor, Maestro y Rey de toda la humanidad.

Amigo, dice el poeta cubano Nicolas Guillen, en uno de sus hermosos poemas,

"Cuando yo vine a este mundo Nadie me estaba esperando; Asi mi dolor profundo Se me alivia caminando. Pues cuando vine a este mundo, te digo, nadie me estaba esperando!"

Cuando Jesus vino al mundo, pocos, casi nadie, lo estaba esperando. Lo esperaba su madre Maria; tambien lo esperaba su padre Jose. Quiza algun pariente lo esperaba el rey Herodes; ni tampoco Augusto Cesar; ni los filosofos de Atenas; ni los misticos de la India; ni los astrologos de Babilonia; ni los sabios de la China; ni los sacerdotes de Jerusalem.



nia; ni los sabios de la China; ni los sacerdotes de Jerusalem.

Pero lo esperaban, eso si, los profetas antiguos, que habian sonado con su venida; y lo esperaban, aunque sin darse cuenta, todos los pecadores de este mundo. El vino, al debido tiempo. Para usted y para mi. Para ser nuestro Salvador.

Por el Hermano Pablo



Jose Went To Mexico

By Rick Martínez

I was taking roll on the run in fourth period the other day. My sixth-graders were a bit unruly, always so until we get down to work. Social studies Chapter 4 tests were being passed out, to be finished in cooperative groups.

"Where's José?" I growled to no one in particular.

"José went to Mexico," Jesús chimed in.

"Oh."

Neither the teacher nor any of the 35 students said a word more about it. We just went on to ancient history.

"José went to México." As I thought about it later, all of us in fourth period instantly knew what that meant. I knew because I spent many of my 20 years in journalism either covering or following U.S.-Mexico migration issues. The kids knew what it meant because they've been in public school for seven years and see this every Christmas.

It's the time of year when many U.S. Border Patrol agents take vacations, since most of the traffic is heading southward. Each year, as many as a million *mejicanos* living in the United States go south to share the holidays with family -- parents, grandparents, siblings, cousins -- *al otro lado*.

This year's Navidad exodus

has a presidential twist. Vicente Fox, Mexico's new president, came north to popular border crossings in Arizona and Texas this month to personally order the Mexican border authorities to cease the quasi-official practice of extorting bribe money from returning Mexicans. Fleeing Mexicans of some of those U.S.-earned dollars has always provided a Christmas bonus for the Mexican border officers.

That's not to say Fox has wiped out the practice in one presidential swoop. But it certainly was a wonderful photo opportunity that sent the right message: U.S. Mexicans are welcome at home. And not stated outright, but certainly understood, their U.S.-earned dollars (usually sent by wire) are critical to a poverty-riddled Mexican economy.

Researchers on both sides of the border have documented that the low end of Mexico's jalopy-like economy has had a critical dependence for decades on the millions of dollars sent home by Mexican men and women working in the United States.

Here in California, I've met skinny teenage boys willing to live in chicken coops while working as gardeners or taking other day-labor jobs to build a stake that will allow them to go

home and marry. I knew a 48-year-old man who was paying off his rancho and supporting a wife and six children back home with the money he was earning in construction.

Fox knows all this. That's why, in his first month as president, he is poking the bear. Gently making it known that not only does he want the United States to invest even more in his country's development, this brassy Mr. Fox suggests an eventual opening of the U.S.-Mexico border to the free movement of migrants.

Gads! What an earth-shaking development that would be! What would happen to all those U.S. Border Patrol agents who are looking toward federal retirement in 20 or 30 years? Would it spell the end to the generous Navidad bonus program Mexican border agents have depended upon to put extra tamales on the table every December?

And what of the *coyotes*, the smugglers who make \$1,000 per person or more, shuttling immigrants across the border? We can't expect them to pick grapes for a living, can we?

No, this Fox and his crazy ideas could upset the apple cart for many in this corporate immigration business. This is an

especially dangerous idea in light of the fact that the U.S. economy is buzzing along at such a high ebb.

Then factor in that, come Jan. 20, there will be a new U.S. president from Texas who, when he looks south, has not looked for a fight, but for economic opportunity. George W. Bush knows border issues firsthand.

If there's one thing that Vicente Fox and George W. Bush believe about themselves, it is that they come to their new jobs as outsiders and mavericks. As a result, innovation in border relations is a real possibility.

This potential for change must be giving nightmares to an entrenched border bureaucracy in both countries. U.S. and Mexican bureaucrats alike have grown fat and happy for too long adhering to overriding government philosophies best summed up as "same stuff, different day."

Felices fiestas, José. (Rick Martínez is a sixth-grade teacher in Victorville, Calif. The former newspaper editor and reporter is a founding member and officer with the National Association of Hispanic Journalists.)

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Los Mercados Prosiguen La Dispersion Hispana

Por Cynthia L. Orosco

Son tan antiguos como las tiendas generales aztecas y tan nuevos como los cinematógrafos IMAX, con estacionamiento diagonal agregado. Son financiados por una mezcla de extraños millonarios y activistas comunitarios -- y están propagándose por todo el país.

Son los mercados. Combinando las ansias culturales con los ingresos cada vez mayores de los latinos, los mercados pueden hallarse en todos los rumbos de la bñijula estadounidense, desde las ciudades-cunas latinas, tales como San Antonio, hasta sus nuevos campos de juego, como Orlando.

Sus conceptos recorren toda la gama -- desde super-mercados glorificados, amistosos para las familias, hasta las atracciones turísticas con sabor latino que valen muchos millones de dólares. Algunos sirven como incubadoras para el desarrollo comunitario.

En Los Angeles, Atlanta y Detroit, la mayoría de los clientes -- latinos y no latinos por igual -- llegan desde la zona circundante. En Orlando y San Antonio, la mayoría son turistas. Por todo el país, los mercados están sirviendo como centros de oportunidad para empresarios e inversionistas por igual.

Un lugar donde está ocurriendo esto es en Los Angeles. Después de cuatro años en desarrollo, el Mercado La Paloma empezó a ofrecer exhibiciones preliminares de fin de semana el 4 de noviembre.

Creado por la Esperanza Community Housing Corp. (Corporación Comunitaria de Vivienda Esperanza), el proyecto de \$6 millones se halla situado en un almacén de ropas renovado en el corazón de una zona industrial de ingresos bajos cerca de la parte comercial de la ciudad.

Para atraer la atención hacia La Paloma, la concejala municipal Rita Walters ha ayudado a crear estacionamiento diagonal cerca del centro y a cambiar el recorrido del servicio de autobuses a fin de que pase por el conjunto comercial.

Melanie Stephens, directora de Esperanza para desarrollo comunitario, explica: "Las personas de la vecindad dijeron que necesitaban un lugar céntrico de reunión donde conocieran a los comerciantes, un lugar al que pudieran llevar a sus familias."

El objetivo de 'Esperanza' es ayudar a revitalizar a la comunidad circundante en el sentido más amplio de la palabra, agregó la Sra. Stephens. A este fin, el segundo piso de La Paloma alojará a oficinas para siete organizaciones no lucrativas, espacios para reuniones y un laboratorio de computadoras para fines de capacitación de la comunidad.

Un mercado está ayudando también a revitalizar a la comunidad latina de Detroit. La Mexicantown Community Development Corporation (Corporación Comunitaria 'Mexicantown' para Desarrollo, MCDC en inglés) ha auspiciado un mercado de verano de ocho

semanas durante los siete años recientes. Los vendedores que se gradúan del programa empresarial de la MCDC establecen sus tiendas en el mercado, vendiendo una diversidad de artículos nacionales e importados.

"El mercado ha ayudado realmente a incrementar la visibilidad de Mexicantown y la confianza en la misma," dice María Elena Rodríguez, directora ejecutiva de la MCDC. "Estamos abriendo líneas de comunicación y ayudando a realizar toda la zona."

La colocación de la primera piedra del Welcome Center internacional, por valor de muchos millones de dólares, está fijada para el verano próximo. Este alojará a un mercado permanente para 20 vendedores, galerías de arte, un cinematógrafo, un centro cultural y oficinas comerciales.

El centro servirá como plataforma de lanzamiento para que los empresarios amplíen sus negocios en otros lugares, dice Rodríguez.

En Atlanta, el Grupo RAM para Desarrollo ha creado la Plaza Fiesta. El centro, con 350,000 pies cuadrados de espacio, conocido antes como Oriental Mall, destaca tiendas coloridas con vista a la calle, típicas de los países de la América Latina. Los propietarios consultaron a los dirigentes comerciales latinos locales y visitaron a México antes de la transformación del centro comercial.

Además de las tiendas principales como Burlington Coat Factory y Marshalls, Plaza Fiesta proporcionará espacio para 155 vendedores individuales que ofrecerán productos tradicionales de un mercado.

Uno de los mercados más antiguos del país es la Plaza del Mercado de San Antonio, administrada por el departamento municipal de parques y recreo. El emplazamiento donde está construida ha alojado a un mercado mexicano desde principios del siglo XIX. Los granjeros originales vendían ganado en pie y cosechas frescas, y los empresarios esperanzados abrieron y mantuvieron la primera y más antigua farmacia de la ciudad.

Después de varias transformaciones y de su demolición eventual, un edificio levantado en 1938 alberga ahora a vendedores grandes y pequeños, que suministran artículos tanto familiares como singulares.

Otro mercado duradero es La Placita Olvera, en la histórica Calle Olvera, a la que se considera como el lugar de nacimiento de la ciudad de Los Angeles. Esta destaca una plaza tradicional de estilo mexicano y 27 edificios históricos, y atrae a casi dos millones de visitantes locales cada año. Algunos de los vendedores de la Calle Olvera son descendientes de aquellos que establecieron las primeras tiendas allí en el decenio de 1930.

El Mercado de Orlando proporciona tiendas y comedores que rodean a una zona de plaza central. Las principales son seis restaurantes y dos 'clubs' nocturnos. Tres millones de personas visitan al centro cada año. Su patio está disponible para el alquiler a fin de celebrar funciones privadas.

"Básicamente, somos una atracción turística," dice la representante de mercadeo Nora Osorio. "Las tiendas son establecimientos de papá y mamá, administrados por comerciantes interesados, algunos de quienes han permanecido allí durante más de 10 años."

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vendor areas and offer more ethnic products and fresh goods -- all efforts to entice the growing Latino communities they serve.

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Jose Fue A Mexico

Por Rick Martínez

Yo estaba pasando lista de prisa en el 4 período el otro día. Mis alumnos de 6 grado estaban un poco majaderos, como siempre, hasta que empezamos a trabajar. Los exámenes de estudios sociales, capítulo 4, estaban siendo distribuidos, para ser terminados en grupos cooperativos.

"¿Dónde está José?" gruñí, sin dirigirme a nadie en particular.

"José fué a México," apuntó Jesús.

"Oh!"

Ni el maestro ni cualquiera de los 15 alumnos dijo una palabra más sobre ello. Sólo continuamos con la historia antigua.

"José fué a México." A medida que pensé sobre eso más tarde, todos nosotros, en el 4 período, supimos instantáneamente lo que significaba eso. Yo lo sabía, porque pasé muchos de mis 20 años de periodismo, o bien informando de primera mano o siguiendo a los asuntos de migración entre los Estados Unidos y México. Los chicos sabían lo que significaba, porque han estado en la escuela pública durante siete años y ven esto en cada Navidad.

Es la época del año en que muchos agentes de la Patrulla Fronteriza toman sus vacaciones, porque la mayor parte del tránsito se encamina al sur. Cada año, tantos como un millón de mejicanos que viven en los Estados Unidos van al sur, para compartir los días festivos con sus familiares -- padres, abuelos, hermanos, primos -- al otro lado.

En este año, el éxodo de

Navidad tiene un giro presidencial. Vicente Fox, el nuevo presidente de México, vino al norte, a los lugares populares de cruce de la frontera en Arizona y Texas en este mes, para ordenar personalmente a las autoridades fronterizas mexicanas que suspendieran la práctica casi oficial de exigirle dinero a los mexicanos que regresan. El despojar a los mexicanos de algunos de esos dólares ganados en los Estados Unidos siempre ha proporcionado un "aguinaldo" de Navidad a los agentes fronterizos mexicanos.

Esto no equivale a decir que Fox haya eliminado la práctica con un plumazo presidencial. Pero fué en verdad una oportunidad fotográfica maravillosa que envió el mensaje correcto: Los mexicanos de los Estados Unidos son bienvenidos a casa. Y no declarado abiertamente pero ciertamente entendido, sus dólares ganados en los Estados Unidos (que acostumbra enviar por cable) son críticos para una economía mexicana plagada por la pobreza.

Los investigadores documentales de ambos lados de la frontera han substanciado que el extremo bajo de la economía destartada de México ha tenido una dependencia crítica, durante los decenios, sobre los millones de dólares enviados a sus casas por los hombres y las mujeres mexicanos que trabajan en los Estados Unidos.

Aquí en California, he conocido a chicos delgados que están dispuestos a vivir en gallineros mientras trabajan como jardineros, o a efectuar cualesquiera otros trabajos de

jornaleros para reunir una suma que les permita regresar a sus casas y casarse. Conoció a un hombre de 48 años que estaba pagando su rancho y manteniendo a una esposa y seis hijos en su lugar de origen, con el dinero que él estaba ganando en la construcción.

Fox conoce todo esto. Esa es la razón de que, en su primer mes como presidente, él esté agujoneando al oso. Haciendo saber cortésmente que él no sólo quiere que los Estados Unidos inviertan todavía más dinero en el desarrollo de su país, este Sr. Fox broncoeado recomienda una apertura eventual de la frontera entre los Estados Unidos y México al libre movimiento de los migrantes.

¡Rayos y truenos! ¡Qué acontecimiento sería ése, que haría temblar la tierra! ¿Qué sucedería a todos esos agentes de la Patrulla Fronteriza de los Estados Unidos que están anticipando una jubilación federal de aquí a 20 o 30 años? ¿Señalaría eso el fin del generoso programa de "aguinaldos" de Navidad, del que han dependido los agentes fronterizos mexicanos para llevar tamales adicionales a sus mesas en cada mes de diciembre?

Y, ¿qué sería de los coyotes, los contrabandistas que ganan \$1,000 por persona o más, traficando con inmigrantes a través de la frontera? No podemos esperar que ellos recojan uvas para ganarse la vida, ¿no es así?

No; este Fox y sus ideas locas podrían volcar la carretilla de manzanas para muchos que están en este negocio

corporativo de la inmigración. Esta es una idea especialmente peligrosa, a la luz del hecho de que la economía estadounidense está zumbando en unamarea tan alta.

Entonces tengan en cuenta que, a partir del 20 de enero próximo, habrá un nuevo presidente estadounidense oriundo de Texas, que cuando mira hacia el sur no ha buscado una pelea, sino la oportunidad económica. George W. Bush conoce los asuntos fronterizos de primera mano.

Si hay algo que tanto Vicente Fox como George W. Bush creen acerca de ellos mismos, es que vienen a sus nuevos empleos como fueños (intrusos) y disidentes. Como resultado, la innovación en las relaciones fronterizas es una posibilidad verdadera.

Esta posibilidad de cambio debe producir pesadillas a una burocracia fronteriza atrincherada en ambos países. Tanto los burócratas estadounidenses como los mexicanos han engordado y se han sentido felices durante demasiado tiempo, adhiriéndose a las filosofías gubernamentales predominantes, que pueden resumirse mejor como "el mismo asunto, un día diferente."

Felices fiestas, José. Rick Martínez es maestro de sexto grado en Victorville, California. Fué antes editor de periódico y reportero, y es miembro fundador y funcionario de la Asociación Nacional de Periodistas Hispanos.)

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Mercados Pursue Hispanic Diaspora

By Cynthia L. Orosco

They're as old as Aztec trading posts and as new as IMAX movie theaters, with diagonal parking thrown in. They are financed by a mix of millionaire strangers and community activists -- and they're spreading across the country.

They are mercados. Combining cultural yearnings with growing Latino earnings, mercados can be found at all points of the U.S. compass, from Latino cradle towns, such as San Antonio, to the newest playgrounds, like Orlando.

Their concepts run the gamut -- from glorified, family-friendly supermarkets to multimillion-dollar *sabor Latino* tourist attractions. Some serve as incubators for community development.

In Los Angeles, Atlanta and Detroit, most patrons -- Latino and non-Latino alike -- come from the surrounding area. In Orlando and San Antonio, most are tourists. Across the country, mercados are serving as centers of opportunity for entrepreneurs and investors.

One place where this is happening is in Los Angeles. After four years in development, Mercado La Paloma began offering weekend previews Nov. 4. Created by the Esperanza Community Housing Corp., the \$6 million project is located in a

renovated garment warehouse in the heart of a low-income industrial area near downtown.

To draw attention to La Paloma, City Council member Rita Walters has helped create diagonal parking near the center and rerouted the bus service to pass by the complex.

Melanie Stephens, Esperanza's director of community development, explains, "People in the neighborhood said they wanted a central gathering place where they know the merchants, a place they can take their families."

Esperanza's goal is to help revitalize the surrounding community in the broadest sense of the word, Stephens added. To this end, the second floor of La Paloma will house offices for seven nonprofit organizations, meeting spaces and a computer lab for community training purposes.

A mercado is also helping to reinvigorate Detroit's Latino community. The city's Mexicantown Community Development Corporation has hosted an eight-week summer mercado for the past seven years. Vendors who graduate from MCDC's entrepreneurial program set up shop at the mercado, selling a variety of domestic and imported goods.

"The mercado has really helped to increase the visibility of and confidence in

Mexicantown," says María Elena Rodríguez, MCDC executive director. "We are opening lines of communication and helping to enhance the whole area."

Groundbreaking for the multimillion-dollar International Welcome Center is scheduled for next summer. It will house a permanent mercado for 20 vendors, art galleries, a movie theater, a cultural center and business offices.

The center will serve as a launch pad for entrepreneurs to expand their businesses at other sites, Rodríguez says.

In Atlanta, RAM Development Group has created Plaza Fiesta. The 350,000-square-foot center, once known as the Oriental Mall, features colorful storefronts typical of Latin American countries. Owners consulted with local Latino business leaders and visited Mexico prior to the shopping center's transformation. Aside from the Burlington Coat Factory and Marshall's anchor stores, Plaza Fiesta will provide space for 155 individual vendors offering traditional mercado products.

One of the oldest mercados in the country is San Antonio's Market Square, run by the city's parks and recreation department. The site on which it is located has housed a Mexican market since the early

1800s. Early farmers sold livestock and fresh crops, and hopeful entrepreneurs opened and maintained the city's first and oldest pharmacy.

After several transformations of the square, a building erected in 1938 now houses vendors big and small who carry both familiar and unique wares.

Another enduring mercado is La Placita Olvera on historic Olvera Street, considered the birthplace of the city of Los Angeles. It features a traditional Mexican-style plaza and 27 historic buildings, and attracts nearly 2 million local visitors each year. Some of Olvera Street's vendors are descended from those who first set up shop there in the 1930s.

Orlando's Mercado provides shops and eateries surrounding a central plaza area. It is anchored by six restaurants and two nightclubs. Three million people visit the center each year. Its courtyard is available for rental for private functions.

"Basically, we are a tourist attraction," says marketing representative Nora Osorio. "The shops are mom-and-pop establishments, run by area businesspeople."

Initial developers purchased the property in 1986 and leased retail space to interested vendors, some of whom have remained for more than 10 years.

Other mercado establishments include two run by the New York City Economic Development Corporation: La Marqueta and the Moore Street Market. The first serves the predominantly Puerto Rican community in East Harlem, while Moore Street -- known as La Marqueta de Williamsburg -- serves Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Ecuadorians and Mexicans from Brooklyn and Queens.

At Miami's Palacio de las Frutas, a typical Cuban street mercado, visitors can find a variety of Cuban and Spanish food products, as well as other products typical to Latin America.

Still others, in cities like San Diego, are being developed. The mercado tradition can be traced back to the Aztecs, Olmecs and Mayans in Mexico. The 7th-century city of Cacaxtla, situated on a main route between Teotihuacán and the Gulf of Mexico, was an exchange point for goods moving from one region to another.

While large-scale mercados are mostly found in Southern and Western states, developers in other areas are changing established businesses to capture their ambience.

Texas' H-E-B and California's Vons grocery chains have reconstructed some of their stores to include individual

Pastorelas, Posadas and Other Hispanic Christmas Customs

By: Luis Dumois

In those days a decree from Emperor Augustus was issued, ordering a census for the entire world. [...] Everybody had to be registered, each one in his city. Also Joseph, who came from the lineage of David, came up from the city of Nazareth, in Galilee, to the city of David, named Bethlehem, in Judea, to register himself and his wife Mary, who was pregnant. Being there, the time for birth arrived, and she gave birth to her first born son; she wrapped him in nappies and put him in a crib, because they did not find a place in the inn.

Luke, 2:2-7

Soon we will enjoy our first Posadas for this year in Mexico.

Las Posadas are fiestas that begin on the 16th and end on the 24th of December. In Mexico, during this period, there are many Posadas every evening.

Invited -and as usual, some non invited- guests arrive at the house where the Posada will take place, always in the evening. A group goes outside the house, with lighted candles and papers with the words of the verses to ask for Posada. They sing,

*En el nombre del Cielo
os pido posada,
pues no puede andar
mi esposa amada.
In the name of Heaven
I ask you for lodging,
because She cannot walk,
my beloved wife.*

The group inside answers, also singing,

*Aquí no es mesón;
sigan adelante.
Yo no puedo abrir,
no sea algún tunante.
This is no inn,
keep on going.*

*I won't open the door,
in case you are a truant.*

Many verses are sung in this fashion, with those outside asking for a place to spend the night and the people inside the house saying, no way, until those inside "discover" who are the personalities freezing outside. Then they open the door and let the pilgrims enter. In the very traditional Posadas, a girl is dressed as the Virgin Mary, while a boy represents Saint Joseph. In some cases even a burro is present, for the Virgin to mount. Sometimes, those outside carry images of the Holy persons with them.

When they open the door to let those outside enter, they sing,

*Entren, Santos Peregrinos,
reciban este rincón;
no de esta pobre morada,
si no de mi corazón.
Enter, Holy Pilgrims,
accept this dwelling;
not of this humble house,
but of my heart.*

During the rest of the party we break piñatas, there are villancicos -Christmas carols- in the air and we eat the traditional things: buñuelos (very thin fried pastries covered with sugar), colación (a mixture of different candies), tamales, and ponche, fruit punch.

This beautiful tradition of the Posadas comes from the times of the Colonial period, but it is interesting to note that before the Conquest the Aztecs celebrated every year the arrival of the god Huitzilopochtli, between the 7th and the 26th of December. Under the Spanish domination, Catholic priests incorporated some days of the ancient tradition to a new set of religious festivities.

One of those first Christian festivities in Mexico were Aguinaldo -Christmas presents- masses. After Holy Mass, piñatas were broken, people sang villancicos and they watched the performing of pastorelas. There were nacimientos (depictions of the birth of Jesus Christ) on display for everybody to visit and admire.

The Náhuatl people used to represent plays enacting important historical events and stories taken from real life. Missionaries incorporated this custom to the Christian holidays, so during the nine days of the Posadas many pastorelas were performed on stage. These pastorelas are dramatic pieces that represent the trip of Saint Joseph and the Virgin Mary to register themselves in the Roman census taking place in those days, or the hardships they suffered while looking in vain for lodging. The roles in these pastorelas included, besides Joseph and Mary, shepherds and shepherdesses (pastores), hence the name, pastorelas), sheep, burros, and perhaps a little devil or two.

These pastorelas played an important part in the evangelization of the colonies. Franciscans and Augustines,

among others, used these representations to accompany the religious activities of the day, making the festivities more attractive and colourful. As it



was, this custom was preserved and is still cherished among the Mexican people, a people who love family traditions and vivid fiestas.

It is said that Marco Polo brought with him the idea of piñatas: vessels adorned with color paper, that in China, were broken by hitting them with sticks to commemorate Springtime. Italians adapted the action to symbolize the victory of Good over Evil. In Lent they made piñatas with seven colored paper points, each one representing a capital sin. The stick that broke these sins played the part of Christian faith.

In Mexico the piñata assumed this meaning and then some others. One of them: It is the devil that holds in his belly all that is good in this world, just as the olla inside the piñata is filled with fruit like mandarin, orange and sugar cane; candy and gifts. The stick (Christian faith), put to good use by the

girl or boy who strikes at the piñata (the hard work of women and men in this world), breaks the treasure's chest for the benefit of all.

The piñata is firmly tied to a rope, and then hung from a pole or the branch of a tree. Someone holds the other end of the rope, pulling the piñata up and down to make it a more elusive target. It is customary to let the youngest children start the hitting and then to give the opportunity to the grown-ups. The little ones will be able to see the moving piñata when they try to hit it, while the elders take their turn later, eyes covered with a handkerchief or shawl.

While the hitter is doing his or her best to break the piñata, people surrounding the action sing in a chorus,
*Dale, dale, dale,
no pierdas el tino;
porque si lo pierdes,
pierdes el camino.
Hit it, hit it, hit it,*

don't lose aim;
because if you lose it,
you will lose your way.

Eventually someone, able or lucky enough to accomplish the task, will break the olla inside the piñata. Fruit, candy and gifts fall to the floor, for everybody to rush to gather whatever they can from the scattered goodies.

After piñatas, dinner is served. Tamales with atole, and crunchy buñuelos for desserts. Hot ponche will help to warm the cold winter evening. For the children, ponche made from seasonal fruits, like tejocote, guava, plum, mandarin, orange, or prune, sweetened with piloncillo (a brown sugar), and perfumed with cinnamon sticks or vanilla. For the grown-ups, the same ponche, but with piquete (sting), which is a bit of rum or tequila added to the potion to make it happier. There are as many ponche recipes as there are grannies in Mexico. In Colima, for instance, they prepare a delicious concoction made of milk, sugar, orange leaves and vanilla, grated coconut and a drop of rum.

When the Posada is about to end, every guest receives a small gift, or aguinaldo, usually a package containing cookies, dried and fresh fruit, and colación (assorted and colourful candies). Now is the time to sing villancicos, carols that talk about the good news given to the shepherds by the angels, that our Savior was born. A very old tradition calls for everybody to gather in front of the nacimiento (the nativity scene) to sing villancicos to the newborn child.

Traditional nacimientos picture the birth of Jesus. It seems that Saint Francis of Assisi was the first one to come out with the idea of representing with figures the scene in the stable of Bethlehem. That first nacimiento was placed inside a cave in Greccio, Italy, in 1223,

to later become a well established tradition in that country.

The excellence of Mexican artisans helped in a significant way to the development of this custom in our country. A typical nacimiento shows Jesus in a crib, with the Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph at His side. Inside the portal (porch), which can take the form of a cave, a stone house or a cabin, there are several animals surrounding the Holy persons: burros, oxen, sheep, cows, horses. Additional personalities who take part are shepherds, angels, pilgrims, and the Kings from the East who

came to adore Him. The star they followed to Bethlehem always crowns the nacimiento, giving it light and color.

Soon we will enjoy our first Posadas down here.

These traditions are alive and well in Mexico, thank God, in spite of the noise and hurried pace of our so called modern life.

This is a time for joy. This is a time for children. And as I watch them play and sing and have fun, I know I will remember my own childhood. I will remember those who are now gone, and I will think about the future.



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Merry Christmas



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El Editor, Lubbock, Tx.-December 21, 2000

Immigrants Gain Partial Victory in 11th-Hour Agreement

By RICARDO VAZQUEZ
SAN FRANCISCO.- Maria Echeveste, White House Deputy Chief of Staff

Nearly 400,000 immigrants will benefit from immigration provisions included in a budgetary bill to be approved by the 106th Congress on Friday, hailed as a partial victory by White House Deputy Chief of Staff, Maria Echeveste. "In fact, I'd say it's a victory considering how the other side fought us tooth and nail."

But representatives from the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) say the legislation falls short of including all the proposals contained in the Latino and Immigrant Fairness Act (LIFA) — a bill which the White House, MALDEF and other Latino organizations fought so hard to push through Congress.

Despite what Echeveste labeled as Republican "hostility to issues of fairness for immigrants," she said part of the deal includes the "reinstatement of 245i for anyone who is in the country as of the day the law is passed."

Section 245i was an immigration clause permitting immigrants who qualify for a visa to pay a \$1,000 fee which allows them to wait in the United States while the INS processes their case. Echeveste added that people will have four months to file their petitions.

She said the new agreement also allows immigrants who qualified for amnesty in 1986, but were unfairly turned away by the INS, to finally legalize their immigration status.

In addition, she explained that Republicans included a proposal by Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) to create a new visa program called the "V-visa." According to Echeveste, the V-visa "allows people who are

waiting outside the country for more than three years to be able to come to this country and wait here with their spouse," or family member.

Still, MALDEF's Washington Regional Counsel Marisa Demeo insisted that even the provisions that managed inclusion in the new law were watered down in the negotiations.

For example, she said that instead of the unconditional reinstatement of 245i they had asked for in LIFA, the new measure places two limits: It only allows four months for people to apply, and it only benefits immigrants who are already in the country.

Demeo also complained the bill left out altogether a LIFA proposal that would have provided parity to nationals from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Haiti — they did not benefit from the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act (NACARA) that granted amnesty to Cubans and Nicaraguans.

"The Republicans opposed it. They would not include it in any way," said Echeveste. "They just were adamant. We had the chance here to help 300 or 400 thousand people. We wanted more, but if it hadn't been for President Clinton and his threat of a veto, we never would have gotten what we got."

Demeo agreed she did not want to undervalue what was accomplished. "We're very excited for those who are going to benefit, but because we were looking to help so many others, we were left disappointed," she said.

In fact, she said MALDEF and other Latino organizations will try again to bring before the next Congress issues that were not included in the latest measure like NACARA and benefits for legal immigrants.

And although they find talk of bipartisanship and compromise from President-elect George W. Bush encouraging, they recognize there will be obstacles in getting their proposals through Congress.

"The big question is whether President-elect Bush is willing to confront that small, but anti-immigrant element in his party," Demeo said. "We hope he's willing to bring the parties together and stop these outside anti-immigrant elements from defining the Republican position."

Latino Leaders See Need For Presidential Election Reform

By RICARDO VAZQUEZ
SAN FRANCISCO, - Hours before Vice President Al Gore conceded in a speech to the nation Wednesday evening, Latino leaders and pundits reacted to the remarkable 5-4 Supreme Court ruling Tuesday night that effectively handed the presidency of the United States to George W. Bush. The Justices, split along ideological lines, reversed the Florida Supreme Court and put a stop to any further hand counts. "We have a system, and it has played itself out. [Gore] has

exhausted all the things one could do to challenge an election," commented Arturo Vargas, director of the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO). "Still, it has left me unsettled that there are voters in Florida whose votes were not taken into account -- and I don't think that bodes well for our democracy...I think that is unfortunate."

Within the Supreme Court itself, four of the justices vigorously dissented with the majority's opinion, which said

the December 12 deadline for the selection of electors made it impossible for Florida to come up with both a uniform standard for counting the votes and do it before the deadline.

"In the interest of finality," wrote Justice John Paul Stevens in his dissenting opinion, "...the majority effectively orders the disenfranchisement of an unknown number of voters whose ballots reveal their intent -- and are therefore legal votes under state law -- but were for some reason rejected by ballot-counting machines."

But according to San Francisco political science professor Francisco Wong-Diaz, it is not unusual for the court to split this way. For example, he cites other controversial cases like *The Regents of the University of California vs.*

Bakke, in which the Supreme Court by a 5 to 4 majority found affirmative action quota systems to be unlawful.

"What's new here is the reversal of the Florida Supreme Court," Wong-Diaz said. "Traditionally, the conservative judges in this court have been very protective of state rights. But here, the more liberal judges were the ones who wanted to show deference to the Florida high court."

For Vargas, however, the most important issue to have come out of the battle over the presidency is the need for reforms. "This ultimately means that there is need for some real

reform on how we carry out our elections," he argued. "I think it's an embarrassing situation that the world's leading democracy has such antiquated methods for exercising that democracy."

For his part, Wong-Diaz asserted his belief that the contentious and bitter court battle over the Florida vote has diminished the standing of both candidates. He added that he expected Gore to fully accept the court's decision and to unite the nation behind Bush.

At the same time, Wong-Diaz said "Bush needs to be humble and appear confident but conciliatory."

In the end, both Wong-Diaz and Vargas agree that it will be a challenge for Bush to govern such a divided country.

"Everything is going to be negotiable," said Wong-Diaz, referring to many of the hot issues in the campaign like tax cuts, social security reform, school vouchers and others.



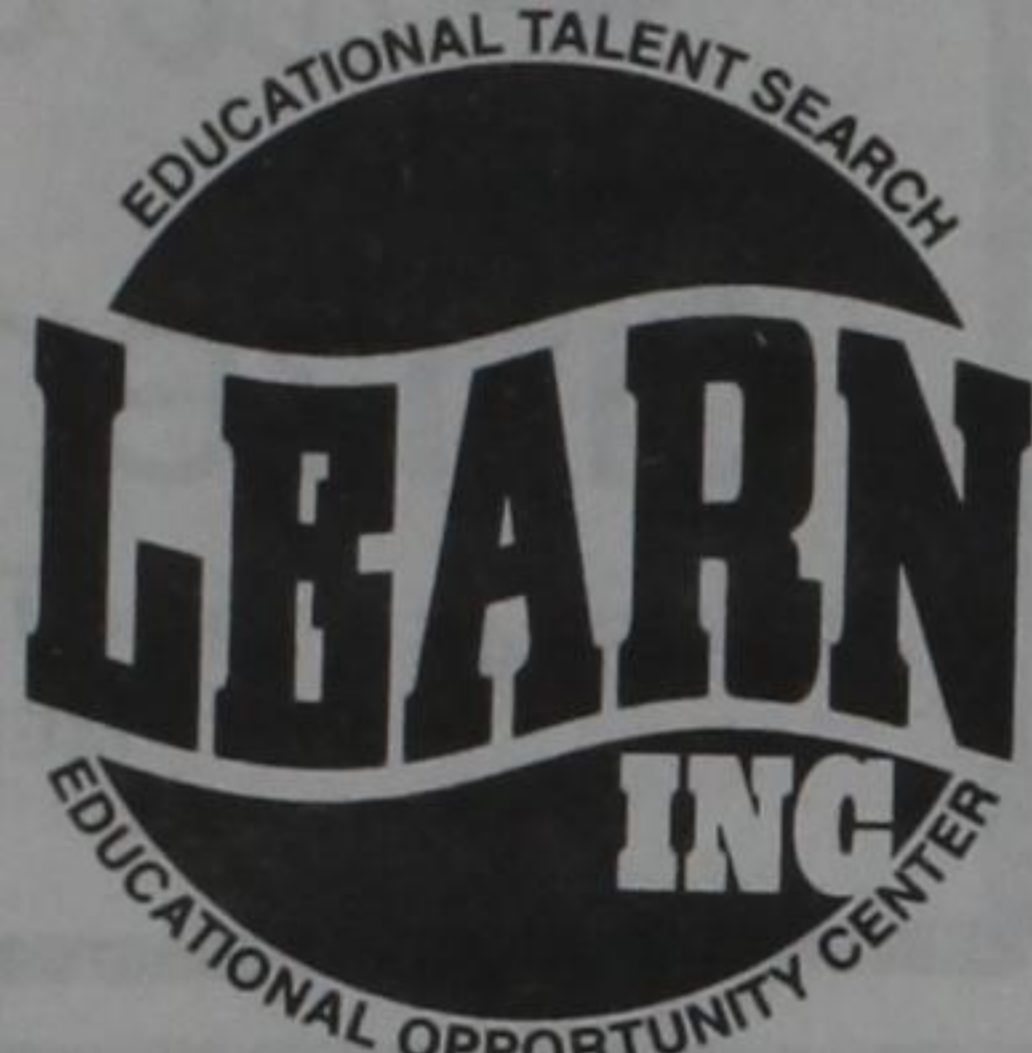
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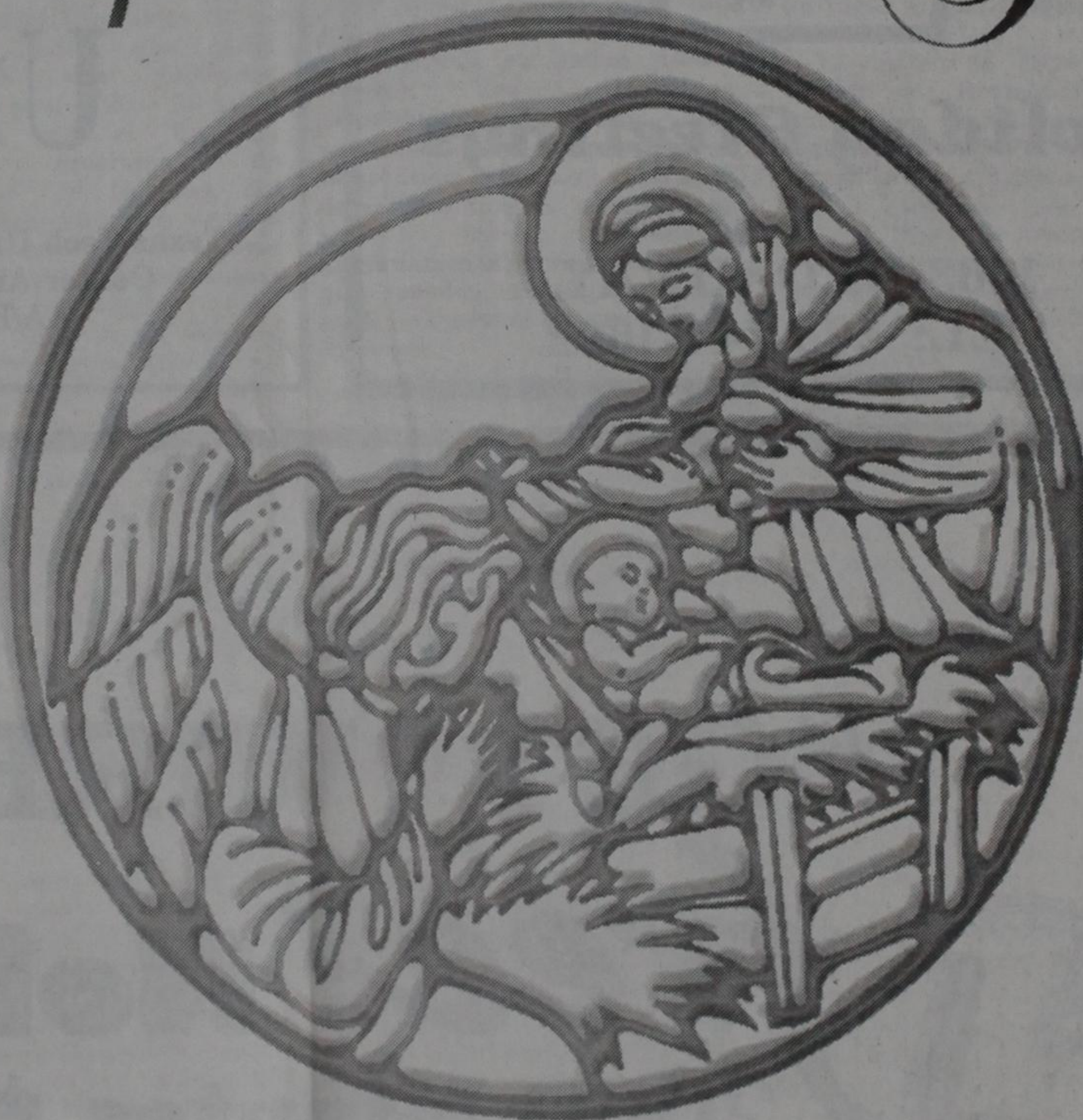
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Christmas In Mexico

The first thing to know about celebrating Christmas in Mexico is that most everybody takes off the last two weeks in December - to party, spend more time with the family, visit with old friends, even make new friends. One of the biggest fiestas of the year - in small towns, big cities, the beach resorts, everywhere - Christmas in Mexico is celebrated in a variety of ways. A common denominator is the *posada*, a recreation of Mary (on donkey) and Joseph searching for a "room at the inn." Accompanying them is a choir of small children who knock on doors asking for lodging for the weary couple. By previous arrangement, there are no takers.

The procession, which takes place during the 12 days before Christmas, moves along, growing in numbers until it reaches the church, where mass is held. After the service, the children get to enjoy a festive *piñata* party.

Even though variations of this *tableaux* are repeated throughout the country, you can expect to find some regional differences, which makes a Mexican Christmas not only a cross cultural mix, but a varied and interesting experience. Year after year. Region after region.

For example, in the *Ajijic* area, a "riviera resort community" suburb of Mexico City, in the little village of *San Antonio*, the *posada* is a most moving and spiritual experience. Same for Taxco and Querétaro. Catch the event in these areas if you can. Also in Querétaro, there's a huge parade on December 23.

In the town of *Cajitlán* (near Guadalajara), as in many other places in the Hispanic world, they celebrate the holidays on Three Kings Day (Epiphany), which falls on January 6th. In fact, this was the traditional time to celebrate the gift-giving aspect of Christmas throughout Mexico. But in most parts of the country, the holiday now

coincides with the day of celebration north-of-the-border: December 25. Many children now expect gifts on both days.

The ritual often begins in the afternoon or at dinner time when the family shares a *rosca* or *two* (a *rosca* is a sweet, ring-shaped loaf with a ceramic *muñeca* (doll) representing the Christ child baked inside). Unlike a cracker-jack box where the winner takes all, whoever is *unlucky* enough to get the doll has to throw a party on February 2 (*Día de Candelaria*) for all the others present. In this case, the "winner", who has to foot the time and expense, is often the loser. (Note: on the afternoon of *Día de Candelaria*, *dancers gather for a performance in the churchyard. Sometimes as many as six different dance groups perform at the same time. The dancers are divided among those portraying Christians and Moors, each competing for the most attention. Other groups are represented as well. In small towns where this festival is held, there's also a special market on that day.*) The party itself usually includes some favorite dish spiced with a zesty regional molé sauce.

The fiesta for the *Virgin de la Soledad*, the patron saint of Oaxaca, December 16-18, signals the beginning of the *navidad* festivities. The highlight, again, is the *posada*, held at a different church each night from December 18-24. On December 23, the annual *Noche de los Rábanos* takes place. This is a very festive time when booths are set up along the length and breadth of the *zócalo*. The focal point of each booth is an exhibit of hand-carved, giant radishes. Most often, these sculptures carry a religious theme. But this is not necessarily so. The subject could be comical, a scene from a bullfight or anything that strikes the fancy of the sculptor. On *Nochebuena*, processions from various churches fan out to the *zócalo*. There are also colorfully-

decorated floats, music, traditional dancing, and piñata prizes. The crowning glory of this fiesta is a mammoth fireworks display. On Christmas Eve, in *Santiago Tuxtla* (Veracruz), everybody assembles in the *zócalo* for an evening of dancing the *huapango* to the accompaniment of a *jarocho* band. In *Quiroga* (Michoacán), villagers present Nativity plays (*Pastorelas*) at churches on Christmas Eve and on Christmas Day. Even the capital *México City*, takes on a festive air with the famed *zócalo* (or sometimes called the *Plaza de la Constitución*) ablaze with a sea of colorful lights festooning this ancient square. The festival of lights goes on throughout the Christmas/New Year's period. In addition, there's a colorful flag-raising/lowering ceremony every morning and afternoon during the holidays. The rest of the city is similarly decorated. And, of course, traditional services are held in the city's many churches.

El Nacimiento Del Niño Dios

Esta navidad el mundo cristiano se prepara a celebrar el nacimiento de Jesús, el redentor del mundo que vino a pagar los pecados de la humanidad y a entregar el mensaje divino de paz y amor para iniciar una nueva época capaz de propiciar el pleno desarrollo del espíritu humano al servicio de sus semejantes.

Hoy como nunca nos encontramos alejados de estos principios. Una conmemoración de la llegada del humilde entre los humildes ha perdido su sentido filosófico, ha propiciado se apoderen los mercados del templo interno de la gente, dominando más la conciencia de la niñez, juventud y adultos la leyenda del Santa Claus proporcionador de todo tipo de regalos, cuanto más santuosos más presuntamente cercanos al espíritu caritativo que debe reinar en la temporada.

Tan bien manejada ha sido la distorsión de la celebración navideña que para muchas familias pobres se convirtió en un verdadero martirio.

¿Cómo no sacrificar hasta el último centavo con tal de no dejar sin juguetes a los niños propios, cuando sabemos que el vecindario entero proporcionará a los suyos los juguetes más relucientes, los juegos electrónicos sofisticados de la era moderna, los nuevos vestuarios cuando menos, que se acostumbran dar para hacer digna la celebración? ¿De qué...? ¡Ah!, si. Del nacimiento de Cristo.

Nunca como antes se hace más notoria la necesidad de

decorated floats, music, traditional dancing, and piñata prizes. The crowning glory of this fiesta is a mammoth fireworks display.

On Christmas Eve, in Santiago Tuxtla (Veracruz), everybody assembles in the zócalo for an evening of dancing the huapango to the accompaniment of a jarocho band.

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volver al auténtico espíritu cristiano. Cada vez es más urgente llamar la atención a la humanidad para que voltee a ver el pesebre donde fue depositado el niño Jesús rodeado de pobreza, carente de lujos inútiles cuando su misión era redimir al mundo en contacto con los auténticos valores de la naturaleza entre los que nació, se desarrolló y creó su aún incomprendido mensaje de amor y paz.

El oportuno llamado del Papa Juan Pablo para no convertir la celebración navideña en una festividad de consumo, tiene más características simbólicas que apego a la realidad de comercialización en la que se encuentra desde hace muchos, ¡ay!, muchos años.

Corresponde a los guías espirituales del mundo hacer campaña permanente durante todo el año para hacer conciencia del auténtico significado de esta Noche Buena, de la humildad y pobreza que rodearon el nacimiento de Cristo, del Redentor del Mundo.



En ocasión de las festividades navideñas, las calles de las ciudades están abarrotadas de gente que camina de un lugar a otro, se detienen y entran o salen de las tiendas, en busca de regalos para los seres queridos. Es la tradición.

Durante las Navidades, hay mucha movilización de dinero; las empresas productivas por lo regular dan bonificaciones a sus trabajadores; debido a las

ventas voluminosas, las tiendas emplean personal adicional, en fin, hay mil y una maneras de evolucionar el capital.

Es posible que para 240 millones de personas en los Estados Unidos no hay ninguna dificultad notable en estas navidades, pues de una manera u otra encontrarán recursos para celebrar la festividad.

Pero para una pequeña minoría que podría ser entre 500,000 a un millón de personas, la situación será diferente. Se trata de gente que no tiene por obligación que esconderse en alguna estación subterránea de trenes o camiones.

Nosotros llamamos a esas personas, los desamparados, aquellos que para comer tienen que rebuscar entre los desperdicios de alimentos en los zafacones o ser favorecidos por la caridad de algún transeúnte que se conmueve a verlos así.

Esas personas no tendrán navidad, o es posible que un gran número de ellas si las tenga, dependiendo de que usted,

lector, se conmueva con este comentario y se sienta con deseos de ayudar a uno de esos pobres desgraciados.

Es una ayuda tan siquiera por un día, dos, tres, de los que están cerca de la Navidad. Pedir más que eso, a lo mejor sería exigir mucho para buscar resolver un problema que quierase aceptar o no compete a las autoridades federales.

Nosotros, sin embargo, podemos aportar un granito de arena para alegrar a estas pobres

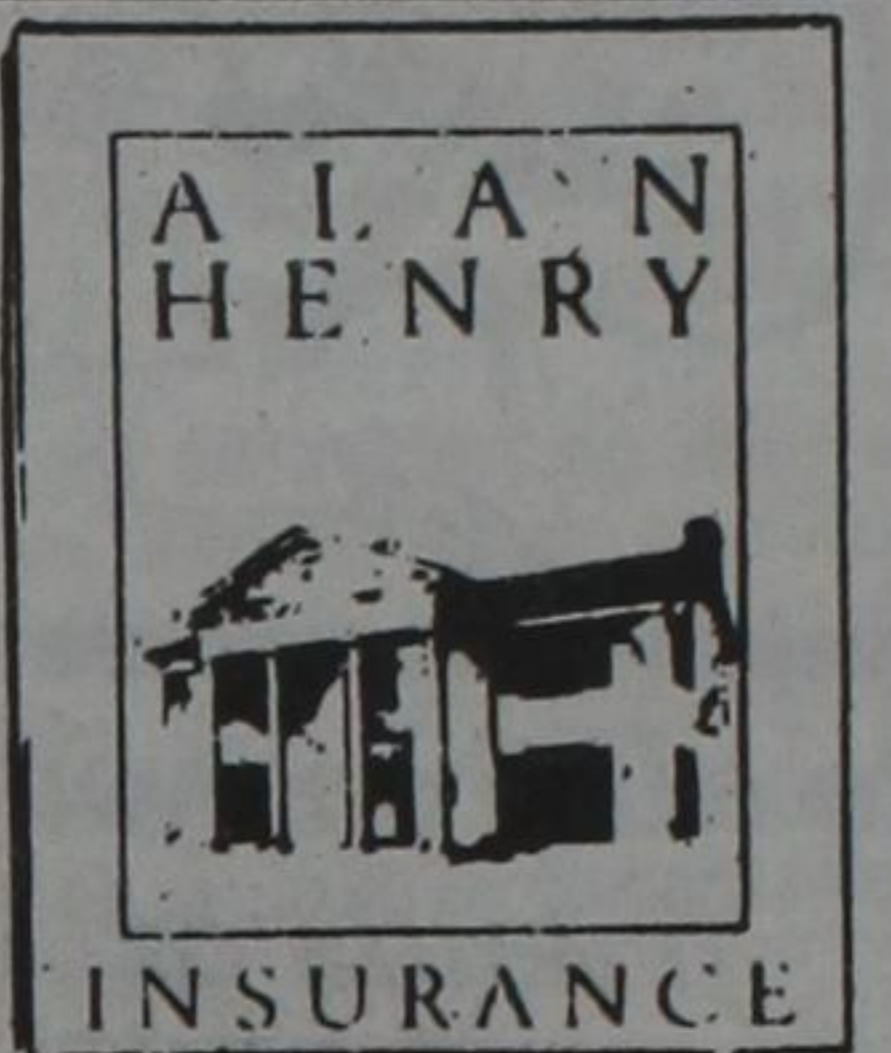
almas y de esa forma dar más calor a una celebración tradicional que tiene mucho que ver con el amor, es sacrificio y con el cuidado a los demás, porque surgió con el nacimiento de Dios hecho hombre, en su afán por salvar a la humanidad.

Se puede socorrer individualmente a un desamparado, dándole comida en la calle o quien sabe si de otra mejor forma.

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continued on page 6

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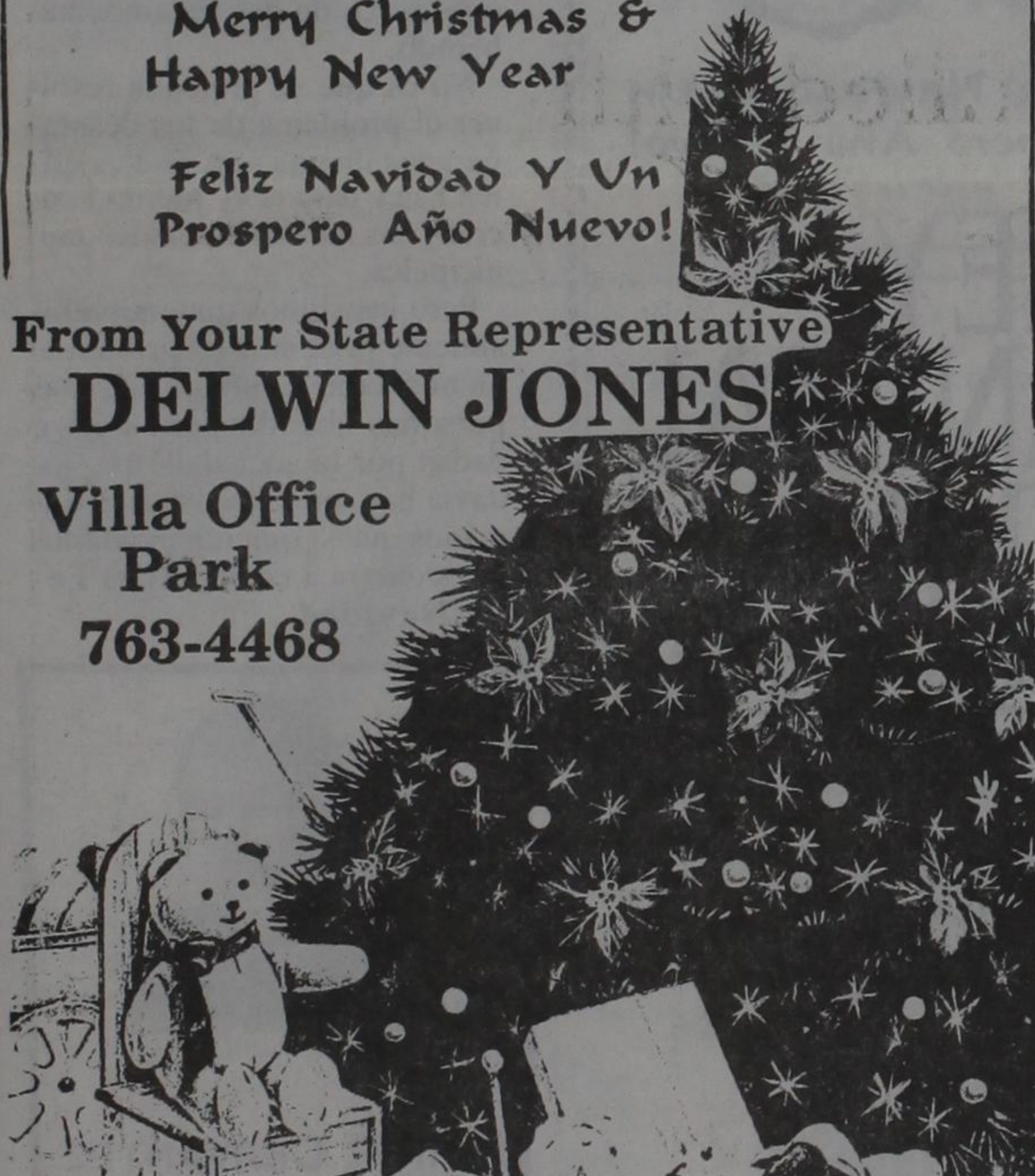
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EL ORIGEN DE LAS POSADAS

"En el nombre del cielo, os pido posada pues no puede andar mi esposa amada..."

Las posadas se han llevado a cabo desde hace 398 años, justo nueve días antes de la navidad. El festejo se realiza del 16 al 24 de

diciembre, tiempo durante el cual se representa simbólicamente el peregrinar de José y María a su salida de Nazaret, culminando en la Nochebuena con el nacimiento del niño Jesús.

Amenizadas con letanías que se vuelven cánticos, las posadas reaniman el espíritu religioso de los participantes, cómo olvidar esos momentos, los peregrinos, las

oraciones, la procesión, las piñatas, el ponche, la fruta, pero sobre todo la emoción, alegría y amistad que se respira durante este tiempo.

Dichas fiestas de fin de año tienen su origen más allá de la época colonial, cuando los indígenas festejaban durante el invierno ó Panquetzalitli, el advenimiento de Huitzilopochtli, Dios de la Guerra. En un esfuerzo

de evangelización los religiosos agustinos, sustituyeron la imagen de Huitzilopochtli por la de José y María.

En sus inicios estos festejos no fueron como los conocemos ahora, primeramente se les llamó "fiestas de aguinaldo" y consistían en la proclamación de la misa

No obstante algunos autores atribuyen el origen del adorno a los chinos, quienes durante la primavera confeccionaban una figura de vaca, buey o búfalo cubierta con papeles poli cromados y rellena de semillas, con el objeto de vaticinar

El simbolismo de las piñatas, es también muy particular, representa al diablo quien atrae al hombre con placeres superfluos, la persona vendada es la fe que es ciega y se encarga de destruir al espíritu maligno y el palo encarna la virtud que vence la tentación. También se cree que la piñata representa las tres virtudes teológicas: la fe, la esperanza y la caridad.

Asimismo la forma clásica de la piñata es la de estrella con siete picos y significa los siete pecados capitales: soberbia, lujuria, gula, ira, avaricia, pereza y envidia.

Por otro lado es obvio que la tradición se ha modificado y de aquellas piñatas confeccionadas en ollas de barro, sólo van quedando recuerdos. Y qué decir de las piñatas y sus tradicionales figuras de estrella, frutas o flores que por la inevitable influencia de los medios de comunicación, está siendo sustituidas por los héroes surgidos de películas, cómics.

Ciertamente se trata de conservar la tradición, por ello no permitamos se apague la luz de las velas que iluminan la procesión de los peregrinos, mucho menos dejemos se olviden los cantos que dan vida a las posadas, unamos nuestra voz y recuperemos nuestras costumbres.

Dale, dale, dale, no pierdas el tiempo, mide la distancia, que hay en el camino...

From Page 5

organización o iglesia que haya preparado un encuentro para esa gente sin hogar.

Podemos coleccionar alimentos, ropa y a lo mejor buscar algún techo que ofrecer.

En fin hay muchas maneras de celebrar la Navidad, no sólo para nosotros que gracias a Dios disponemos de recursos (muchos o pocos) para cumplir con nuestras obligaciones familiares, sino también para esos seres de que estamos hablando.

No es que se pretenda resolver el problema de los desamparados de una vez. Eso es difícil hasta para el Gobierno Federal y las administraciones municipales.

Pero insistimos que individualmente podemos contribuir, al menos con demostrar a esas personas abandonadas y olvidadas por la sociedad, que todavía hay unos pocos seres humanos que sí quieren ayudarlos tan siquiera a celebrar una Feliz Navidad.

intercalada con pasajes y escenas alusivas a la Navidad. Como atractivo se daban pequeños regalos a los indios que participaban, además se incluían piñatas, luces de bengala, cohetes y cantos populares.

Uno de los elementos indispensables para la realización de las posadas son las piñatas multicolores, éstas tienen un origen bastante incierto, sin embargo, se cree que fue en Italia donde se les dio vida (Pignata significa olla), de ahí, pasaron a España, en donde durante el primer domingo de cuaresma se rompía la olla. Posteriormente los misioneros trajeron la costumbre a la Nueva España, cambiando la fecha para las posadas, más tarde los mexicanos les añadieron adornos de papel.



buenas condiciones para el año agrícola que iniciaba. Una vez vaciada la piñata, se quemaba el papel y la gente obtenía un poco de cenizas ya que la consideraban de buena suerte para todo el año.



KARLA
Created and Illustrated by André DeLeón Edited by Bida Acuña

Si YOU KILLED MY FATHER

to all from your friends at **EL EDITOR**

HEY WAIT A MINUTE...

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Happy Holidays!

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El Vicio De Chocolate Del Autor Tiene Raices Culturales

Por John Rosales

Las barras de chocolate de Hershey con almendras son el descubrimiento más grande del mundo. Junto a los dulces de mantequilla de maní. Yo llevo un H-Bar o un P-cup en mi bolsillo en todo momento. Soy un "chocohólico".

La mayoría de las personas que conozco sufren de chocoholismo. Le regalan chocolate a sus seres queridos. Beben chocolate caliente en invierno. Vierten dulce de chocolate sobre el helado. Pero la mayoría de las personas no sabe, ni les importa, de dónde viene esa sustancia oscura. Siempre que puedan conseguir una barra de chocolate cuando la quieran.

Los días festivos de diciembre son la mejor época para comer chocolate. Y la peor para sentirse culpable. Esta culpabilidad sobre mi vicio me ha motivado a averiguar sobre posibles curas.

He aquí lo que aprendí: Nací retado por el chocolate. Esto lo heredé de mis antecesores latinos. Los latinos descubrieron el chocolate y transmitieron su adicción a sus descendientes. Está en mi sangre y no hay cura alguna.

La fabricación del chocolate, hasta entrado el siglo XVI, estaba rampante en la América Latina. Los olmecas, famosos por sus "cabezas colosales", desarrollaron primero la semilla de cacao cruda alrededor del año 1500 antes de Cristo. Ellos fueron los primeros adictos al chocolate.

Durante años, comerciaron con la semilla de cacao y su mezcla líquida y dulce con los mayas, quienes la transmitieron a los toltecas y aztecas. Este fue el comienzo del chocoholismo.

En su libro, titulado "La Verdadera Historia del Chocolate" en inglés, Sophie y Michael Coe explican que muchas de las guerras libradas entre los pueblos indígenas de México y la América Central se debieron a las rutas de comercio del cacao.

Los autores explican que

eran primordialmente los altos sacerdotes y otros miembros de la aristocracia quienes disfrutaban del cacao como bebida. Pero este tesoro líquido iba más allá de ser un refrigerio. En algunos casos, las semillas de cacao se usaban como dinero o se recetaban como medicina.

Bajo circunstancias más oscuras, la preparación líquida se usaba para simbolizar la sangre del corazón en el sacrificio humano. Se pensaba que la ingestión de una taza brindaba despreocupación a las víctimas del sacrificio o valentía en los guerreros.

A medida que aumentó la producción, el tomar cacao se convirtió en una costumbre después de las comidas en la clase media -- como un postre de la era moderna.

Sólo una quinta parte de la existencia del chocolate es posterior a la caída de la capital azteca en 1521", dicen los Coe. Aún la palabra moderna "chocolate" se deriva de la unión de la palabra maya "chocol" (caliente) y la palabra azteca para el agua "atl". En náhuatl, el idioma de los aztecas, la palabra para chocolate era "xocolatl", que significaba "agua amarga" ("xoc" significa "amargo").

En su libro, titulado "Chocolate -- El Alimento de los Dioses", Chantal Coady dice que la palabra azteca "xoc", que se pronuncia "choc", viene del sonido del cacao mientras se muele con una vara de madera, que suena "choc-choc".

Coady explica que la infusión de chocolate de los aztecas y los mayas era distinta a la de hoy. "Era esencialmente una bebida fría, apetitosa, con chiles, canela y clavos. La adición de harina de maíz servía para absorber la grasa (mantequilla de cacao), que flotaba hacia arriba".

Coady dice también que los aztecas tenían bloques de cacao en inventario para facilitar la producción rápida de millares de tazas de

"xocolatl". El gusto de los aztecas por lo dulce exigía gratificación inmediata.

Los conquistadores españoles disfrutaron de su propia infusión de chocolate, que mezclaban con azúcar y vainilla. Después de que España, Italia, Alemania, Austria y otras partes de Europa fueron expuestas a este nuevo placer, las semillas de cacao se convirtieron en uno de los recursos naturales más preciosos para cultivar y exportar del Nuevo Mundo.

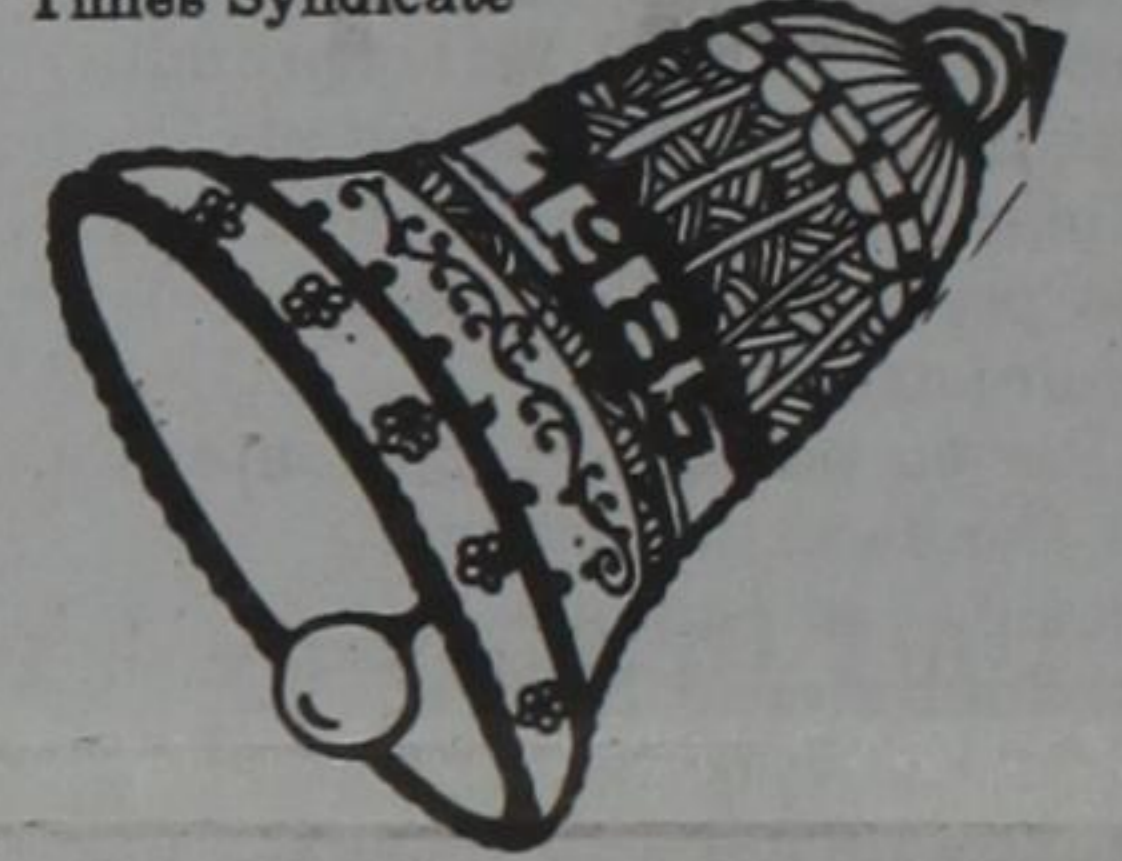
Para comienzos del siglo XVII, los colonizadores españoles habían establecido sembrados de cacao por todo el Caribe, desde México hasta Trinidad y Haití. A medida que la colonización española se extendió a América del Sur, las plantaciones de cacao prosperaron en las zonas con climas favorables de Venezuela, Perú y Brasil. Los misioneros y frailes franceses que viajaban por la región no sólo salvaban almas, sino que también reunían recetas de chocolate, que enviaban a sus monasterios. Según parece, a todo el mundo le encantaba el chocolate.

Esto es consolador. Aunque las barras de Hershey y los dulces de mantequilla de maní no fueron inventados por los primeros latinoamericanos, su descubrimiento y consumo del chocolate explica mi dependencia en el chocolate.

Aunque me preocupo más por el gusto que por la historia del chocolate, puedo decir esto sobre mi afición: No tengo la culpa.

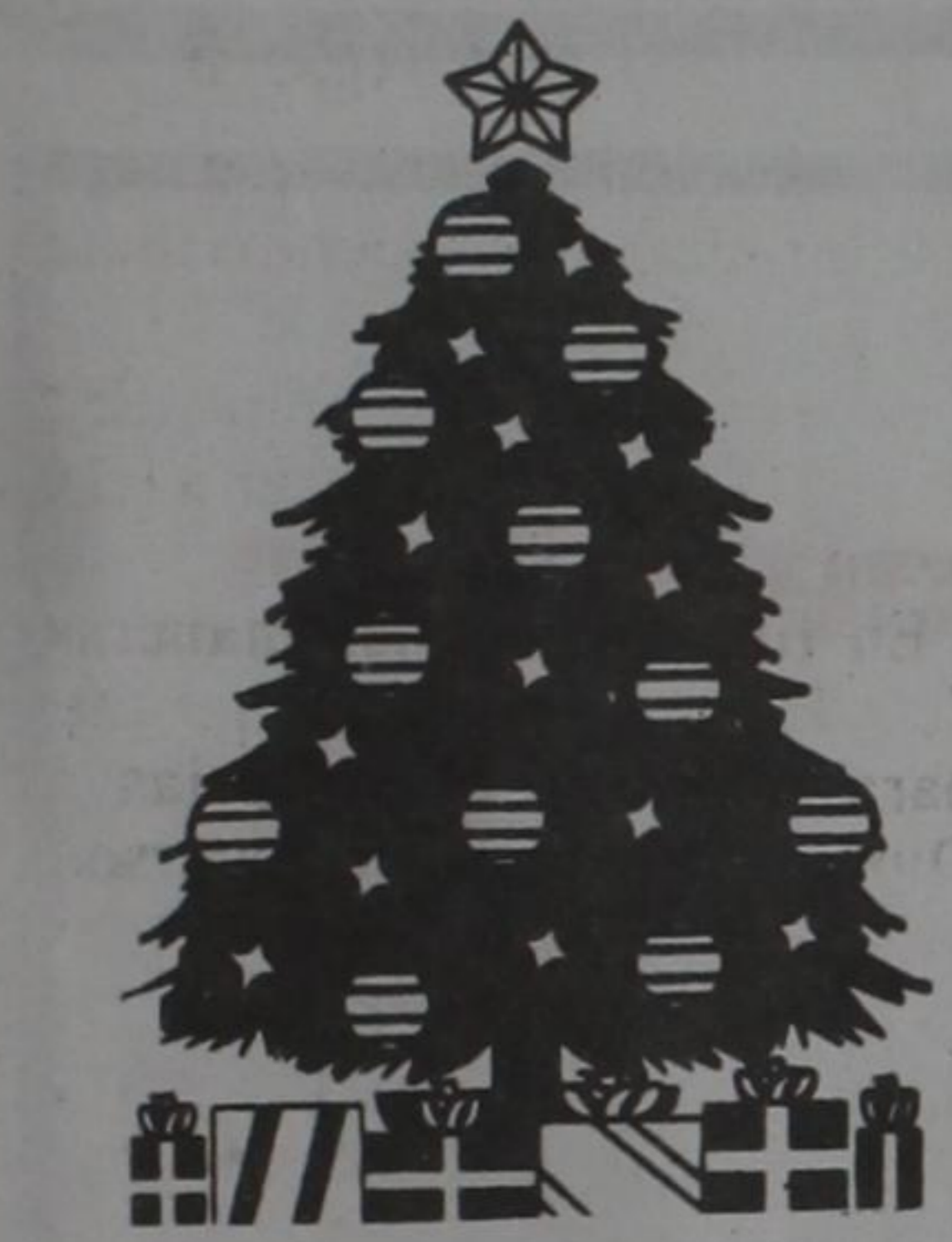
(John Rosales, oriundo de San Antonio, vive en Washington, DC.)

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Bishop Placido Rodriguez celebration "El Día de la Virgen Guadalupe at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Lubbock. Celebrantes de "El Día de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe"

Photos by John P. Cervantez



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Merry Christmas & Happy New Year **Holiday Greetings**

Feliz Navidad



We wish all of you and your loved ones the most wonderful Christmas ever, and in this coming year of 2001, it is our hope that you may have...

- * Enough happiness to keep you sweet
- * Enough trials to keep you strong
- * Enough sorrow to keep you human
- * Enough failure to keep you humble
- * Enough hope to keep you happy
- * Enough success to keep you eager
- * Enough friends to give you comfort
- * Enough wealth to meet your needs
- * Enough enthusiasm to look forward
- * Enough faith to banish depression
- * Enough determination to make each day a better day than yesterday

This message was a favorite of founder H.D. "Jack" Snell Jr., and sharing it with you has been a United Christmas tradition since 1976.

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Twass The Night Before Christmas

'Twass the night before Christmas, and all through the CASA,
Not a creature was stirring. I wondered, "QUE PASA?"
I was hanging the stockings with MUCHO CUIDADO.
I hopes that old Santa would feel OBLIGADO,
To bring all the children, both BUENOS Y MALOS,
A nice batch of DULCES and other REGALOS.

My brothers and I went to sleep in our CAMAS,
Some in long underwear, some in PIYAMAS.
When out in the yard there arose such a GRITO,
That I jumped to my feet like a frightened CABRITO.
I ran to the window and looked AFUERA,
And who in the world do you think Quien Era?
St. Nick in a sleigh and a big SOMBRERO
Came dashing along like a little BOMBERO.
And pulling his sleigh, instead of VENADOS,
Were eight little BURROS, approaching VOLADOS.
I watched as they came, and this fat little HOMBRE
Was shouting and whistling, and calling by NOMBRE:
'AY PANCHO, AY PEPE, AY CUCA, A BETOI 'AY CHA-
TO, AY CHOPO, MARUCA Y NIETO'
Then standing erect, with his hands on his PECHO,
He flew to the top of our very own TECHO,
With his round little belly like a bowl of JALEA,
He struggled to squeeze down our own CHIMENEA.
Then huffing and puffing and a little CANSADO,
He picked up a bag that looked so PESADO.
He filled all th stocking with lovely REGALOS.
For none of the NIÑOS had been very MALOS.
The chuckling aloud, seeing very CONTENTO,
He turned like a flash and was gone like the VIENTO.
And I heard him exclaim, and this is VERDAD:
'Merry Christmas A TODOS... FELIZ NAVIDADI!'

derechos civiles durante la administración de Ronald Reagan, Linda Chávez, entre otros.

¿Qué piensas sobre la designación de González como asesor directo de Bush?

Comparte tu opinión con otros lectores de Latino.com

Bush podría influir en las elecciones del 2002 y el 2004 si demuestra que un gobierno republicano puede utilizar el talento latino, dijo el domingo a "Los Angeles Times" el empresario Sol Trujillo, que apoya a Bush.

"Si no hay hispanos en posiciones importantes, la gente dirá tal vez que persisten los

estereotipos del pasado y que el Partido Republicano no ha incluido a las minorías", recalcó.

"Si no hay hispanos en posiciones importantes, la gente dirá tal vez que persisten los estereotipos del pasado y que el Partido Republicano no ha incluido a las minorías".

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Grandes Expectativas Por La Designación De Latinos

AUSTIN - Líderes latinos esperan que el presidente electo George W. Bush incluya a más hispanos en su gabinete, tras la designación de Alberto González como asesor jurídico de la Casa Blanca.

El juez González nació en San Antonio, Tejas, y se crió en Houston. Se graduó en escuelas públicas de Tejas, la Universidad de Rice y la Escuela de Leyes de Harvard.

El juez del Tribunal Supremo de Texas, Al González, que por mucho tiempo ha apoyado y

asesorado a Bush, no sorprendió a nadie al convertirse en el primer hispano designado a una alta posición en la nueva administración.

Por su parte, el presidente del Condado de Orange (Florida), el cubano-estadounidense Melvin Martínez, se convertirá en el segundo hispano en alcanzar un puesto importante en el próximo gobierno de Bush, cuando el presidente electo anuncie mañana, miércoles, su designación como secretario de Vivienda, según fuentes republicanas.

El abogado Martínez, de 54 años, casado y con tres hijos, tuvo cierto protagonismo nacional durante el debate del caso del niño náufrago cubano Elián González, pues apoyó la permanencia del menor en territorio estadounidense.

Durante la campaña presidencial, líderes hispanos se preguntaron si Bush nombraría a un hispano como miembro del Tribunal Supremo en caso de llegar a la Casa Blanca.

controvertida porque González no tenía experiencia como juez. En su posición de juez, González fue conocido como un moderado en el tribunal cada vez más conservador.

Viene de la página anterior "Sé que puedo confiar en las decisiones de Al (González) porque fue mi primer asesor", dijo Bush al anunciar la designación el domingo y enaltecer sus valores éticos.

Como asesor jurídico de la Casa Blanca, González asesorará al presidente en todos los asuntos legales, incluyendo políticas, ética y respecto a si debe firmar o vetar una propuesta de ley.

Los líderes latinos no están seguros cómo responder a la designación porque la gran mayoría apoyó al vicepresidente Al Gore y no esperaban ninguna anuncio político de forma inmediata.

Según el Proyecto para la Educación e Inscripción de Votantes del Suroeste, una organización no partidista de investigación, Bush consiguió aproximadamente el 35 por ciento del voto latino a nivel nacional, pese a que superó a Gore en la preferencia de los latinos al principio de su campaña.

La designación de González se compara al primer término de Bush como gobernador de Texas, cuando su primer nombramiento recayó en el hispano Garza pese a que la gran mayoría de latinos en Texas apoyó en 1994 a la gobernadora demócrata Ann Richards.

Ese nombramiento, según dijo Garza a EFE antes de las

elecciones de noviembre, "significó para los hispanos y la región fronteriza que Bush iba a ser el gobernador de todos los tejanos, y no solamente los que votaron por él. Yo creo que él también actuará de la misma manera como presidente".

Garza también puede ser designado para ocupar un cargo en la administración de Bush. Elegido en 1998 como comisionado del sistema de Ferrocarriles de Texas, una

agencia estatal poderosa que regula la extensa industria del gas y el petróleo en el estado, Garza es mencionado como posible secretario de Energía, según varias fuentes.

Otras latinos mencionados para la nueva administración incluyen al presidente del partido republicano de Florida, Al Cárdenas; el legislador por Texas, Henry Bonilla; la ex cirujano general Antonia Novello, y la ex comisionada de

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