



The Thinker

For every issue,
there is another
side; think
about it.

June 2, 1995

A Bi-Weekly Publication

Vol. 1 No. 7

Do native peoples have a right to the Southwestern U.S.?

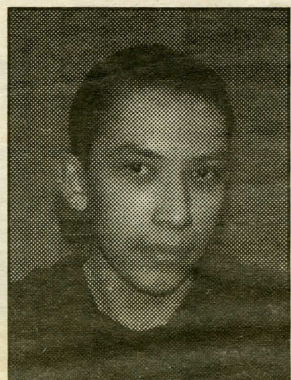
This fall, Californians voted on whether services to illegal immigrants should be reduced and eliminated. The debate over Prop 187 generated significant hostility and animosity among Mexican Americans and European Americans. To many people, Prop 187 became a fight of angry white males trying to kick people of color out of California.

The Thinker asks you to turn the tables and reconsider the issue. Should the Southwestern United States be returned to its indigenous people? Are white men and women the illegal immigrants? Are the politics of Aztlan, the idea of a traditional homeland for Mexican Americans in the Southwestern United States, just and fair?

Aztlán: Present and Sovereign

Jesús David Valle

In the past few years, I have encountered the idea of Aztlán in a number of places and in a variety of media. Cherie Moraga informs us in poem, the movie "Blood In, Blood Out" provides an example of Aztlán's *carnalismo*, and the works and plays of Luis Valdéz serve to construct, define, and understand our perceptions.



Partaking of this literature is a humbling experience. It has not been without extensive and brilliant research, or exceptional inspiration, that the above people have been able to write, act, and produce the body of discourse that they have.

In comparison to this tradition, I am far from qualified to write on the subject on Aztlán. However, the ideas and thoughts of every individual do incorporate into the larger scope, and for this reason, it seems that there ought to exist a discussion — not a proclamation of a "right" way and not an attempt to "define" — that extends beyond Mexican/Latino/

Native/etc. groups in the attempt to "bounce" our ideas off other communities so that we better learn their perceptions of us.

I do not write on behalf of the "community" here at Stanford. Rather, my understanding of my position in writing this piece is as an individual, who, as part of *la raza*, has an interest in the subject. I am no expert, and I have not done years of research.

But neither has the worker in the field.

Neither has the *vato* hanging out on the street corner.

These viewpoints are perhaps more important, because they come from the people, concrete and real, who tangibly constitute *la raza*. It is in their eyes that Aztlán exists and, ultimately, where it will live or die.

This is where I begin.

Aztlán, the idea of homeland, in my mind, is not very much removed from reality. We are simply told and conditioned that it does not exist. One needs to look around at the geographic area of Aztlán, the Southwest, to

see the influence of the native and the *mestizo* in the local culture, vocabulary, and gene pool. *We are still here*, living on the land that, by right of inheritance, belongs to all those genetically linked to the native inhabitants.

Some argue that "the Mexicans took it from the Indians," vouchsafing the point that ultimate ownership does not exist in an attempt to justify the current foreign possession of the land. This is an inaccurate assessment of the situation. *That various tribes in the Americas fought against each other is irrelevant when considering the propriety of an outside colonization and invasion. Either tribe, even if enemies, has priority in their own land over the peoples from another hemisphere.*

Because this is a very real Aztlán, look around in your classes, on University Avenue, and in East Palo Alto. What you will find is the *visible and present* legacy of murder, rape, and conquest — where the descendants of original occupying forces have been handed the control of this land's resources and placed into the positions of social control through media and education. Oppressive tactics used to further the occupation continue, manifest not simply in legislation such as Proposition 187, but moreso in the *sentiment* behind the law.

Please see "Valle" on page 3

Bizarre, Impractical and Self-Defeating

Jack Guerrero

Few political movements of contemporary national significance are as bizarre, impractical, and self-defeating as the struggle for regional separatism along cultural-political lines. In this country, the most popular of these extremist campaigns is known as Aztlanism, of which MEChA represents the student political arm on college campuses across America — from the insignificant East Los Angeles College, to far away Yale, to as close to home as Stanford. Fighting the movement from a public policy standpoint is hardly the problem (few even in MEChA circles are really serious about political realization); the challenge is understanding what this struggle of the fringe, among the fringe is really all about. Before analyzing the merit of regional separatism, it is necessary to understand a more fundamental feature of the movement, its basic political structure.



The story line that fuels the Aztlan crusade or, at least, feeds the average Aztlanist's indignation goes something like this: the native Aztec Indians occupied the mythical "Aztlan" territory (now known as the American southwest) for centuries before Manifest Destiny drove Americans to take over the region. In light of this unwelcome invasion, MEChAns argue, descendants of the formerly sovereign Aztecs deserve reparations. (Never mind that the Spaniards and the Mexicans both had previously conquered the land in similar fits of imperialism.) The historical issues aside, it isn't quite clear for what, or for whom, these modern-day Aztlanists are really fighting. The lightest scrutiny reveals that Aztlanism misidentifies both the oppressed (to whom the land should be restored) and the oppressor (from whom the payment should be extracted) in its calculation of reparations.

I am convinced that very few Aztlanists and MEChAns are serious about such nonsense. It is more likely that they are just simple people with good intentions and bad ideas.

When first introduced to the movement, one might think that the rightful heirs of Aztlan, those peoples on whose behalf MEChAns now fight, are those who have an uninterrupted ethnic lineage to the original peoples of the southwest. But ethnicity has nothing to do with the movement.

A visit to the local MEChA meeting would prove my point. You won't find a gathering of Indians, you won't see anyone dressed in traditional Aztec garb, and you won't even hear any native languages spoken during the meeting. On the contrary, the modern-day Aztlanists are hardly Indian people and certainly do not identify overtly with past Indian cultures. Indeed, most are fairer skinned and at least partly of Spanish/European stock.

What is important for Aztlanists is that prospective members have a shared leftist political ideology and a similar *Che Guevarian* vision of the future. Hispanics who are just as ethnic as the most vociferous of Aztlanists, but who don't espouse their radical dogma, find themselves unwelcome at the movement's frolic gatherings. Indeed, at our very own Stanford, MEChAns have been known to encircle, harass, and alienate community dissenters, as reported in past campus headlines and depicted in a recent documentary film that focused on their tactics. MEChAns are known for talking poetically and describing the movement of Aztlan as more of a feeling, a spiritual rejuvenation, a dream, or something to sing songs about around the campfire, but when it comes right down to it, if prospective members don't pick up the signs, walk in the marches, and join the active political cam-

Please see "Guerrero" on page 3

Next Issue (October 1995) . . .

Should the Environment and Social Concerns be Principal Considerations in Stanford's

The Thinker



Ryan Bounds
Editor-in-Chief

Nick Thompson
Publisher

Matt Garlinghouse
Managing Editor

David Valle
Advertising Manager

Michael Pace
Circulation Manager

Karen Levy
Gregg Osofsky
Features Editors

Associate Editors
Kenny Howery
Michael Keinath, Matt Holloway

Statement of Purpose

The Thinker is an independent student publication intended to promote thought, communication, and lively discussion about current issues that demand consideration and reflection in the Stanford community. *The Thinker* offers students, staff, and faculty members the opportunity to express their views to a diverse audience.

How to Contribute to The Thinker

The Thinker invites submissions from all persons affiliated with the Stanford Community. To join a mailing list discussing topics for future issues, send email to majordomo@lists, and, in the text of the message, type: subscribe thinker-writers. To submit a piece to *The Thinker*, either mail it to post office box 6828, or send it via email to thinker@lists. You can call *The Thinker* at 497-1137.

Special Thanks to:

Kelly Hirano
Ed Malone
Justin Pollard
Chicago Pizza
Stanford Ice Cream Factory
Postal Annex
Publications Board

© 1995 The Thinker

Please remember to recycle and

Thoughts . . .

Raw or Nothing

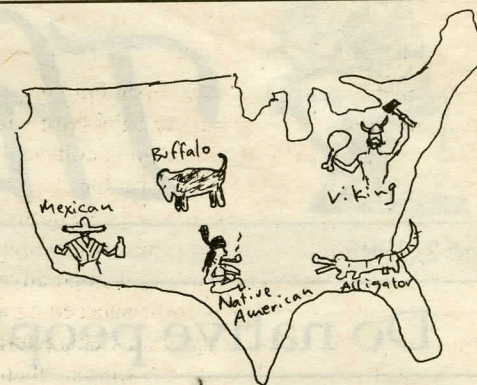
I think we should give the entire continent to the iktheamus igsignifigentus, a small breed of the cockroach family that was here before any of us.

Chris Carlson, Sophomore Undeclared

The battle is over, and Aztlan lost.
Get over it.

Personally, I disagree with the notion that the "indigenous people of Aztlan" have the right to claim any part of American land centuries after it has been occupied. Sure, it might have belonged to them way back then, but the fact of the matter is that it was lost to the Americans long ago. Get over it. Is it sensible to complain over a lost game years after it has been lost? Maybe it is not altogether fair, but that's life. I may have certain features of said "indigenous people," but I am an American — a Texan, to be exact — and I feel that we should focus on the pride of being American rather than dwelling on what was lost centuries ago. I nevertheless respect a person's right to BELIEVE this land belongs to Aztlan, just as I respect a five-year-old's right to believe in Santa Claus.

Lucy Reyna, Junior in Psychology



LET'S REDISTRIBUTE THE
WHOLE COUNTRY
God and the Hassle Factor

Reorganizing the Mexican-American border would be a major hassle. Things are pretty crazy as it is with immigration remaining a hot topic in current politics. Can you imagine the waste of time and energy that would occur as a result of organizing the bureaucracy to rewrite all passports, land deeds, and business affairs? Come on, folks, let's use our resources in some other way. Protest Texaco if you have to do something conflictual.

Any action for justice, righteousness, and Truth must be at the service of God. I believe that all that is good comes from God. If you are to do anything in this world, then do it for God. If your morality leads you into Mexican-American border affairs, then fight for Truth because God has told you to do so.

Tyler Graham, Senior in Humanities



Aztlan is a Total Waste of Time

Many Utopian visions and theories (read Ujamaa and communism) look great on paper and terrible in practice. Aztlan can't even satisfy that description because it is irrational, impossible, and butts heads with human nature.

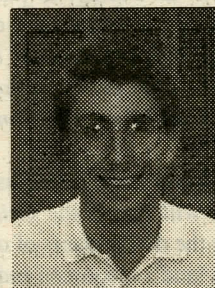
Aztlan fails because it magnifies the sins of Western Culture to the point where the entire culture is one massive sin. Add to this the Aztlanistas' plan to rid their lives entirely of Western Culture and you have one Hell of a Utopian and impossible vision. How do they propose to flush their minds of Western Culture when it is all they have ever lived? How are they going to tell people that they have to throw away their knowledge of a Band-Aid when someone has a cut? How do they plan to eradicate from their world Western Culture when doing so would require destroying every home, car, and school? You can't, and you shouldn't, make people forget their ingrained mindsets because Western Culture has a lot of great things to offer, just as Aztec culture has a lot to offer. The bottom-line is this: *Aztlan is the immature yearnings for power by a group of people who know damn well that it will never happen.* Aztlanistas, wake up and make your change from within the system — you have the votes and the passion.

Michael Meyer, Junior in Economics

Editor's farewell

As we finish up this year's last issue of *The Thinker*, we enjoy feelings both of job-satisfaction and of deep appreciation for the efforts of those earnest Stanford intellectuals who have contributed so indispensably to our pages.

When Nick Thompson and I started this paper, we hoped to bring to campus a forum in which people could discuss the pressing issues of our day, issues frequently too broad or controversial to garner comprehensive coverage in other Stanford media. In that objective I think we have succeeded. In our first seven issues, we covered the topics of affirmative action, California's "three-strikes" law, the sexism of housed fraternities, FBI anti-terrorism and surveil-



radical environmentalism, and finally the Chicano Aztlan movement. In each issue, readers have experienced a range of ideas and contentions that, I hope, has been wide and engaging — I have certainly found it so.

Of course, *The Thinker* is nothing without the opinionated submissions that provide its substance. To all of the individuals who have presented their own ideas in this forum for public scrutiny, contest, and the benefit of us all, I offer a heartfelt thank you on behalf of the Stanford community. For readers who have not been so moved to contribute, I beg you for future volumes to reconsider. A forum is only as useful and as stimulating as its participants' ideas. Argue assiduously, and the truth will out.

These conclusions may sound harsh, but the harsher reality lies beneath the Arizona sun in a cotton field, with the baby born with birth defects, and with every *vato* who ends up in prison rather than in college.

Yet Aztlán does not try to shift blame. On the contrary, it ascribes blame to the proper recipients, *and then moves forward*. The framed United States flag in the lounge of Muwekma-tah-ruk states it the best, where underneath the flag reads the mandate, "MAKE SOMETHING OF IT." It is imperative that we remember a history that is uniquely ours, while at the same succeeding in the present.

One argument used against Aztlán's characteristic of placing value on "older" ways basically concludes with the words, "then go back to Mexico," or "nobody is stopping you from wearing moccasins and hunting for a living." This is a true observation. But the person saying such things must first understand the full impact of what has taken place.

For me, I would willingly turn to native ways. But I cannot, because for me to go and live in the desert, or for a small group to go, is not to recapture that which was lost: a continent-wide network of society, trade, and knowledge. Indeed, there is no way back.

So if we cannot ever fully return, we must continue to develop Aztlán in the present setting and situation.

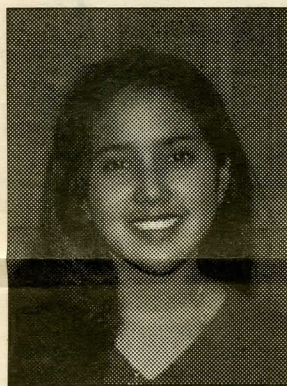
In fact, because we are here, and by way of birth rates of brown people *here* on this soil, this already *is* Aztlán. A state and a state of being.

Aztlán, present and sovereign.

Jesús David Valle, Junior in English

Aztlán: A Homeland

What is a homeland to most people? A homeland is a source of pride, integrity and history. This is what Aztlán means to the Chicano people, people who are of Mexican descent and who are cognizant of the struggle that accompanies being a person of color in the United States. It is also for people who have experienced the injustice and rude racism that unfortunately has been a component of the Mexican identity.



Historically, Aztlán refers to the part of the current United States that once belonged to Mexico but was lost during the Mexican-American war. However, Aztlán is not just a possession that was justifiably transferred after an international conflict. It has come to represent something grander due to the other things that were lost when the Mexican people were dispossessed of their land, the home of their ancestors before them. With the encroachment of the land-hungry, pioneering American came the forced

assimilation of the Mexican to a new way of living, a new existence in which the Mexican no longer owned his own land, but was oppressed in ways that have become institutionalized and that persist to this day.

However, the concept of Aztlán has grown and flourished. It is no longer something that can be geographically quantified and it cannot be tangibly embodied. Aztlán is more. It is a crucial component of the Chicano social, cultural, and intellectual imagery. It supports and legitimates our pursuits for racial equality and justice and in it is manifest the beauty and expanse that our unique bi-cultural identification embodies.

Efforts to dismantle the idea of Aztlán are futile in the face of its intense spirituality and symbolic significance. However, it is not simply a notion, a disjointed appendage to the Chicano construct of identity. Aztlán is an integral feature that provides a sense of ownership, legitimate cultural pride, and historical recognition of what once was and the circumstances in which it was lost. Aztlán exists not just for Chicanos but for everyone who is not fooled into thinking that this land never existed before the Europeans arrived to conquer and civilize it—because it did.

The very substance of the Southwest and Western United States is imbued and rooted with Mexican influence and ancestry. In the face of hateful and overtly racist legislation such as Proposition 187, Aztlán is a necessary conceptual tool that humanizes the Chicano and the immigrant Mexican because it allows him a home, a land, a space in history that has been continuously ignored and belittled in the history books. When people are history-less, property-less, and possession-less, they become invisible and susceptible to destructive measures like Prop. 187. Aztlán is the mental faculty that expresses the fortitude and will of people who are continuing to resist the injustice that pervades the very fabric that has draped their experience in the United States.

Sensitivity to the concept of Aztlán accompanies sensitivity to the poverty in the barrios, the farm-worker movement, and the plights of the immigrant and exploited industrial workers. If you remember Aztlán you probably can't forget the Japanese Internment Camps, the cruel Mexican Deportation raids, the enslavement of the African-American, and the Trail of Tears.

Veterans have Memorial Day and wreaths of remembrance, patriots have the Fourth of July and Old Glory, Jews the Passover, and Catholics the Mass. These are all significant components that define an identity and they are legitimate simply because they construct a vital picture of how a particular life should be led. Just as these groups experience these vital constructs so Chicanos who are proud of their heritage and history of struggle for racial equality, opportunity, and justice experience the cultural and intellectual dynamic that is glorious Aztlán.

Nicole Vazquez, Junior in Political Science and English

paign for liberalism, they may as well take their poetry elsewhere. Hands down, political ideology is the main criterion for membership! A devout MEChAn once told me that anyone, Hispanic or not, who shared the vision of Aztlán would become a full-fledged Chicano in time. So, ethnicity's connection to the cause of Aztlán is, like Aztlán itself, a myth.

Just as MEChAn-Aztlánists have failed to identify accurately the rightful heirs of Aztlán, so too does their movement fail to point the finger of blame in the right direction. The current culprits are lumped beneath one general and unclearly defined conceptual umbrella — known as either society, capitalism, this country, or just "the man." (Ironically this is the same "man" that will eventually validate their prestigious Stanford education with expensive attaches, attractive business cards, and high-salaried jobs.) In practice, the targets are more clear: Ronald Reagan, Anglo-Americans, local politicians, etc. But even at this level, the movement fails to identify the real villains. The rightful direction of blame, if there is any at all, should be underground in a cemetery because the original violators of Aztlán are all dead! Some of their descendants might well be alive today (though you couldn't easily identify them), but as independent individuals and political thinkers, they cannot be blamed as accessories to a crime that took place long before they came into existence, and which was committed by someone with whom they've never conspired, consulted, or even met. For all intents and purposes, their only connection to these people is in their surname or in some meaningless physical feature like eyebrow shade. When asked to identify a criminal from a line-up of suspects, you don't point to the individual who might be distantly related to the person that may have committed the crime, or the one with the similar looking nose.

Even if Aztlánism were to champion a cause on behalf of the legitimate ethnic descendants of the original Aztlánists, an important question to consider is whether or not they are also the rightful victims of the Western, American, and capitalist system that now controls the region. In many ways, the current democratic and economic regime under which the Southwest operates has improved the status of all its people. It is really quite doubtful that the State of California would have become the fifth largest economy in the world had it continued under Native American rule and not joined the American union. It might be true that Native Americans disproportionately suffer from poverty and lower life expectancy, but painting this relationship to be somehow a consequence of non-Aztec political and economic control of the region is ridiculous. It would make more sense for modern-day Aztlánists to address the real problems that affect the people of the region instead of wasting time and resources conjuring up plans to create, an impractical and doomed, separate Aztlán in the Southwest.

I am convinced that very few Aztlánists and MEChAns are serious about such nonsense. It is more likely that they are just simple people with good intentions and bad ideas. Ultimately, I think they just would like to see the status of the downtrodden in their ethnic communities improve. In this objective I join them. As much as any of the most MEChAn among MEChAns, I would like our country to eradicate poverty, promote education, and empower all Americans with the tools and incentives to succeed. Unlike my friends on the left, I refuse to kid myself about foolish and backward policy ideas. Affirmative action, welfare, heavy-handed government, "Chicano" studies, separate homelands, or cultural programming in the name of revolution and at the expense of education all keep feeding the same beast that threatens the livelihood and dignity of the very people we all would like to assist. No, my friends, the solution is not to reform the American southwest into an insular homeland. The solution is to pursue fair, sound, and free-market economics, with a respect for law, order, and traditional morality. Only in this way can we ever empower ethnic Aztlánists throughout the country with the right attitude and proper incentives to succeed.

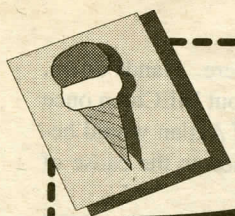
Jack Guerrero, Senior in Economics

The Road to Aztlán: Rights for Chicanos

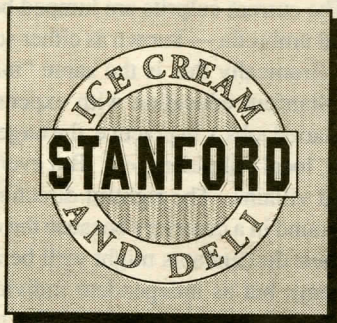
There are two important topics embedded within this issue. First, the potentially obscure notion of Aztlán, and secondly, the right to an area, or homeland. When considering the homeland of the tribe that would eventually found the great Aztec civilization, one must consider the philosophical interpretations of what Aztlán represents to the contemporary Chicano. An understanding of these ideas (which range from a spiritual separation from a purely Mexican or purely American identity to a militaristic desire to reclaim an area that once was inhabited by the founders of Tenochtitlan — the latter definition one that the politically savvy writer might take to heart) provides the informed commentator with a deeper understanding of not only a historical place, but the Chicano experience.

The idea of Chicano/as as permanent and contributing fixture in this society is the basis for the second issue. In short, since a significant number of the citizens of the Southwest are of Mexican descent and since many identify with the Chicano movement, I suggest that these people do indeed have as much, if not more, a right to this land than those from Europe—and still dominate it. What form that right takes is a subject worthy of an entirely different article. Above all, we must acknowledge that this issue is mostly an academic, intellectual, and ideological debate from which, however important, we all risk withholding solutions to the immediate needs of the individuals who continue to resist domination, assimilation, and humiliation at the hands of those who conquered this land over 500 years ago. Therefore, I propose that the rights consist of, at least, basic spiritual, historical, political, economic, educational and human rights for not only Chicano/as described above, but for all the descendants of those peoples present before Columbus, Cortez, and Wilson — a group of which Chicano/as constitute a very large part. This basic level of sovereignty can be measured against the standard of the rights offered to those who, for now, politically and technically own and govern most of the southwest.

David N. Castillo, Masters Student in Sociology



Now in Palo Alto and Menlo Park



STANFORD ICE CREAM AND DELI FACTORY

Your complete Ice Cream and
Frozen Yogurt Store

- Soft Serve Non-Fat Yogurt
- Hard Packed Non-Fat Yogurt
- Gesé Non-Fat Sugar Free
- Over 75 HomeMade
Ice Cream Flavors

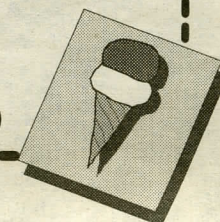
2 FOR 1
Hot Fudge Sundae

Over 75 flavors
641 Santa Cruz Ave Menlo Park • 326-8187
Town & Country Palo Alto • 328-9090
In-store only • Not valid with any other offer
Expires January 1, 1996

2 FOR 1
Milk Shake

Over 75 flavors
641 Santa Cruz Ave Menlo Park • 326-8187
Town & Country Palo Alto • 328-9090
In-store only • Not valid with any other offer
Expires January 1, 1996

Stanford Ice Cream and Deli Factory
611 Santa Cruz Ave., Menlo Park • 326-8187
Town & Country Village, Palo Alto • 328-9090



- Do you disagree with the statement "Karl Marx was a pigeon headed conservative"?
- Do you think that Stanford should invest some of its three billion dollars in corporations other than Tom's of Maine?
- Do you think that the Hoover Institution "should be spared"?
- Do you think that Econ is a legitimate major?
- Do you agree with the statement "in some cases, pavement is good"?

If you answer yes to any of these questions, and if you like newspapers, *The Thinker* needs you. Next year's editorial staff needs a little balance. Call Nick at 7-7354 or send email to thinker@list. Please.

IN PALO ALTO, WHAT'S NEW?

**Yes, Our Award Winning Gourmet deep dish
pizza is NOW available in Palo Alto.**

Try all your favorites like:

THE AL BUNDY

Feta cheese, fresh roasted garlic, fresh basil and sudried tomatoes

- ★ ★ ★ San Jose Mercury News
- Accommodations for large groups
- Daily delivery from 11 AM - Close
- Also located in Santa Clara

415 424-9400

4115 El Camino Real
(1 1/2 blocks N. of Charleston)

Buy one - Get one Free

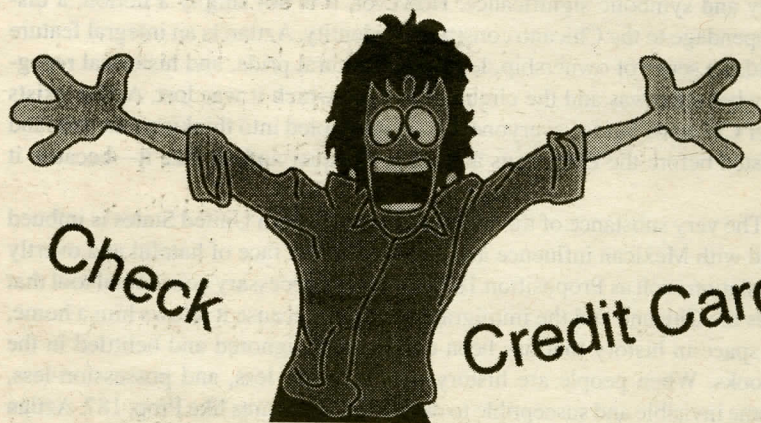


Just buy any of our gourmet pizzas, sandwiches, salads, or any other menu item, and get a second menu item of equal or lesser value for FREE!

Relax

and

Ship it Home via UPS



Check

Credit Card

**Computers • Artwork
Glass • Clothes • Books**

You Pack it or We'll Pack it for You

Ask about our FREE pick up!

Stanford
Shopping

PostalAnnex⁺