

STORIES HISTORY BOOKS SCORN

BEHIND HISTORY'S HEADLINES

Based on newspaper columns by
ANDY PORRAS

FEATURING

Baseball-not a USA brainchild!
Is California's Flag racist?
The African-Mexican Connection
Latinos in the Civil War?
Why Mexicans love the Irish
... and **MORE!**

INTRODUCTION

**"Write what you care about
and you will evoke emotion.
Write what you know about
and you will build credibility.
Write what you would like to know about
and you will discover the truth." ***

When I was growing-up in South Texas, I 'hated' school. Later, I returned to my barrio high school as a teacher. I still hated school. Now, after many moons and having been a teacher, a journalist and an activist, I really hate school!

Mention U.S. History to most youths and their favorite adjective is, "bor-r-ing!" I was in that group once. Few teachers or professors made an attempt to make history come alive or at least, interesting. When you spill the news to a college advisor that you'd like to become a journalist, s/he will most likely guide you into a major or a minor in history and/or government. Background about your country and its laws comes in handy later on in real life; especially when covering political figures.

Your nose for news, or information leading to a good story, will soon pick out other facts. I have interviewed men and women from all walks of life - from migrant farm workers to presidential candidates. And in between, a number of average human beings who had a story to share.

Research can be extremely educational. Just think how much work it is to educate our people. Now, think how much harder it will be to reeducate! For that is what we must do to be able to bring ourselves up to par in our country's real history. Schools really did a number on us! Especially if we are people of color. I am not the only one mad at the schools and trying to revise parts of history, I do feel that I am unique in the way I do it. Almost on a weekly basis, in some newspaper around where I live, in Northern California, people are being made aware of this. I believe that who we were, has much to do with who we are.

*From: The Writer's Little Instruction Book
by Paul Raymond Martin
Writers World Press
Aurora, Ohio

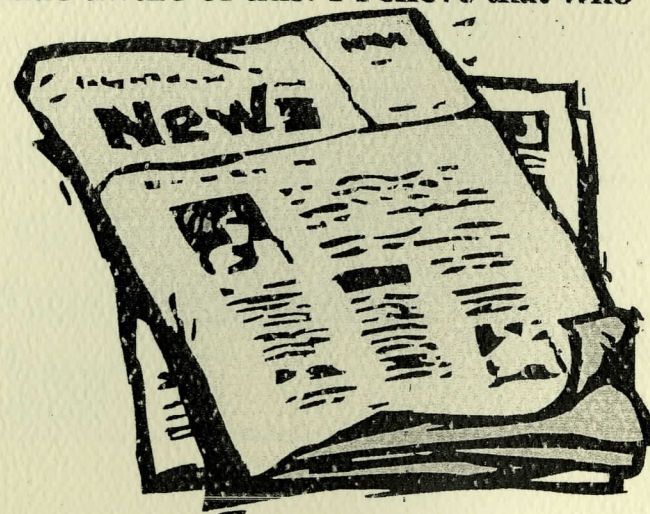


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The African Mexican Connection

There is a much stronger bond between Africans and Hispanics than most realize.

When Columbus sailed the ocean blue, the navigator of the Niña was Pedro Alonso Niño. He was among the many men of African ancestry who were recruited to serve in the invasion of the New World.

Niño, along with other Spanish-black and Native (Indian)-black men from Puerto Rico, Cuba, Haiti, and Jamaica would be at the forefront upon Spain's arrival in Mexico. Thus began the African-Hispanic heritage, seldom heralded and often not appreciated by most scholars or historians.

It is interesting to note that even the Spanish language is peppered with African phrases. When Spanish-speakers refer to "whats-his-name," it comes out "fulano" or "fulano-mangano" - both African in origin. When Mexicans wish to affectionately call attention to a very dark young lady, they call her "prieta" or "morena." Both words allude to the color black.

"I recall wearing a top with the phrase, 'Prietas are Prettier,' on it" said Josilyn Salazar, a college student. "My Dad got it at a T-shirt shop in San José back in the 80s."

During the colonization of California, for example, among the three Jesuit clerics was Father Juan de Ugarte, a huge and extremely strong man who was born in the Sudanese grasslands bordering the Sahara Desert.

Another important name in the history of Black California is Fray Juan Crespi, an associate of Fray Junipero Serra, who of course is more well known in history. One of Crespi's contributions is a journal in which he detailed the participation of Blacks in the Spanish expeditions into the West.

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Afro - Mex Connection

Blacks, Spanish-blacks, and Native-blacks helped in the construction of the famous California Missions in the 1700s.

Pio Pico, the last of the Mexican California governors, was a mulatto. Another governor with African roots was the militaristic conservative, Lt. Col. Manuel Victoria, whom Pio replaced.

Pio's legacy includes the foundation for the state's educational structure. He established schools in Los Angeles, San Diego, Santa Barbara, San José and other cities. He was also responsible for establishing a school for the education of teachers and was the first to raise teachers' salaries.

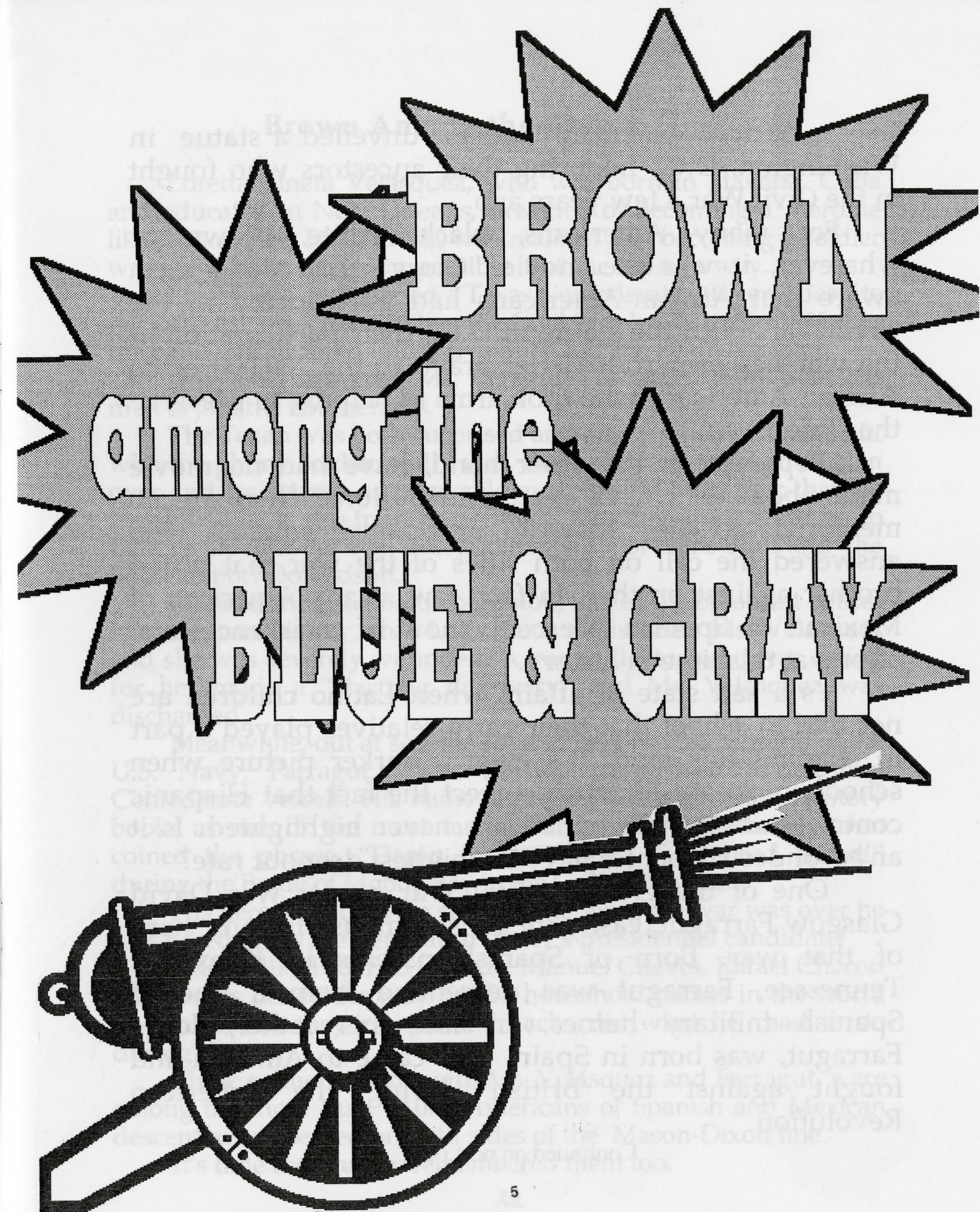
When the Gold Rush of 1849 hit California, the area became an immediate magnet for Blacks from the East. They followed their version of the American Dream into the Golden State and some found fortunes in the gold fields. There was an all Black mining company in the foothills and in San Francisco a Black steamship company and a Black newspaper. Former slaves, it seemed, had finally gotten both their full freedom and an opportunity to work towards their respective goals.

In his book, "Black California," author B. Gordon Wheeler writes, "Racial lines had been ignored before California became American territory, but customs changed rapidly once the U.S. assumed control."

The mining communities resented Blacks the most. At a convention in Monterey, the delegates concluded that Blacks could not testify in court, vote, own property nor use public facilities. In addition, the new rules did not allow them to serve in the militia nor have any say-so in the education of their children.

Wheeler, with respect to the number of Blacks coming West, writes that one of the delegates stated, "a black tide over the land - greater than the locusts of Egypt."

The dream the Blacks hoped to find in California became another nightmare.



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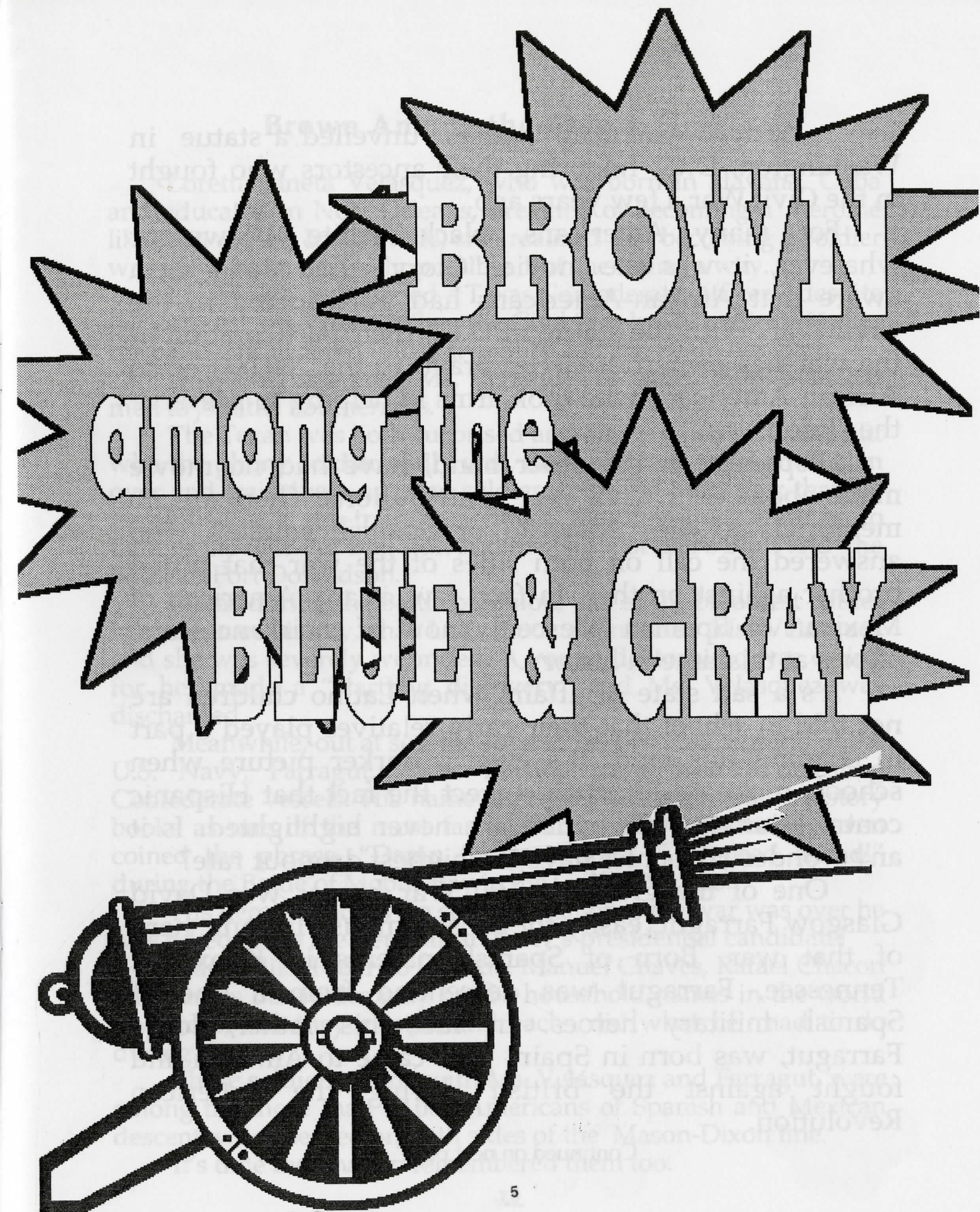
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African-American leaders unveiled a statue in Washington, D.C., honoring their ancestors who fought in the Civil War a few years ago.

For many Americans, black, white, brown or whatever, it was the movie "Glory" that made them aware that African-Americans had participated in the Civil War. With the statue in D.C., their participation in the war has come full circle. Bravo to the 200,000 or so African-Americans who took arms in helping to preserve the Union.

Hispanics on the other hand, have had no movie made about their Civil War contributions. There are no memorials to the Mexican or Spanish soldiers who answered the call on both sides of the war that pitted brother against brother. In fact, few, if any American of Mexican or Spanish descent know of their ancestors' efforts at this time in history.

It's a sad state of affairs when Latino children are not told in school that their early relatives played a part in shaping this land. It's even a darker picture when schools make no effort to correct the fact that Hispanic contributions to this nation are never highlighted. Is it any wonder Hispanics have the highest dropout rate?

One of the greatest Civil War heroes was David Glasgow Farragut, easily the most famous Hispanic hero of that war. Born of Spanish parents in Knoxville, Tennessee, Farragut was descended from a line of Spanish military heroes. In fact, his father, Jorge Farragut, was born in Spain, but came to America and fought against the British during the American Revolution.

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Brown Among the Blue & Gray

Loretta Janeta Velásquez, who was born in Havana, Cuba and educated in New Orleans, dreamed of becoming a heroine like Joan of Arc. Early in life, she realized that becoming a soldier was going to be next to impossible. But she found a way.

Ms. Velásquez married a Texas Confederate officer, despite her parents' objections. When the Civil War broke out in 1861, her husband was ordered into active duty and she began her plan.

Disguised as a man, Ms. Velásquez recruited more than 200 men to join the Southerners.

The Texan was both surprised and angry when he found out who the phony soldier really was. But he agreed to take her men over and train them as rebel soldiers. Not too long after that, he was killed in a gun-training accident. Ms. Velásquez went on to fight in the Battle of Bull Run and the Battle of Ball's Bluff and the Battle of Fort Donaldson.

It was during the Battle of Shiloh, one of the bloodiest battles in American history, that Lady Luck abandoned Ms. Velásquez and she was severely wounded. A young doctor who was caring for her made a "startling discovery" and Ms. Velásquez was discharged.

Meanwhile, out at sea, the soon to be first full admiral of the U.S. Navy, Farragut, was making naval history defeating Confederate vessels. His name is forever written in some history books as one of the most famous U.S. Navy officers. He even coined the phrase, "Damn the torpedoes! Full speed ahead!" during the Battle of Mobile Bay in the Gulf of Mexico.

His heroic deeds were so great that once the war was over he was asked to be the Republican Party's presidential candidate!

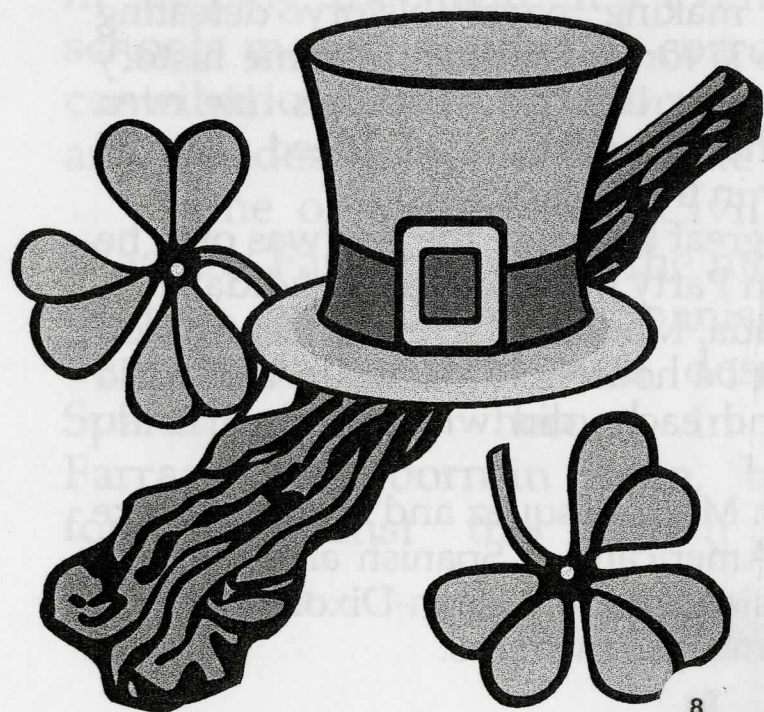
Names like Federico Cavada, Manuel Chaves, Rafael Chacon and Santos Benavides may not be household names in the world of heroes, but they existed and each did what he had to do during the war.

These soldiers, along with Ms. Velásquez and Farragut, were among the more than 10,000 Americans of Spanish and Mexican descent who served on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line.

It's time their nation remembered them too.

iVivaLos

Irish!



A hero is a hero is a hero . . . even in a land not his own.

On March 17, when all good Irish eyes are smiling and or downing a few green brews, Mexican eyes are teary.

It was 1846 and President James K Polk was mad at Mexico. He had made them an offer of some \$25 million for what is now the U.S. Southwest and it was rejected. California was especially inviting to Polk who wanted it included in this real estate package deal. After the 'no-sale' sign went up, Polk decided to provoke war on his neighbors and "save the taxpayers some money."

Enter General Zachary Taylor and the U.S. Army that included Captain John Riley, of Irish descent and a devout Catholic. It is not known whether Capt. Riley knew that one of the reasons for what has been called an unjustified war, was the emphasis of Southern planters wanting to push the borders of the nearest free land farther from the slave states. What Capt. Riley did know was that the Mexican people were being invaded again and that they too were of his faith.

Back in the East Coast, a magazine coined the phrase, "Manifest Destiny" and printed an editorial that stated, "the inevitable fulfillment of the general law which is by saying the Southwest would fall away from "an imbecile and distracted Mexico."

In Washington however, both Abe Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant were leading a congressional protest over the intervention ordered by Polk. Lincoln went as far as saying he would refuse to serve in an army attacking a struggling nation that was a neighbor of the U.S.

The U.S. Mexican War, in reality, signaled the end of the democracy and freedom the people living in the Southwest had known. Capt. Riley begin to realize that he

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¡Viva Los Irish!

would have to play the role of an aggressor much like his people in Ireland had faced. He would be no part of future atrocities.

While stationed in Brownsville, Texas, directly across Matamoros, Mexico, Riley, his fellow Irish comrades and a host of other immigrant soldiers, bolted south of the border. They would join the Mexican troopers and offer their military expertise and join them in their struggle. It was to be called an act of treason by Gen. Taylor, but to many Mexicans the act was a military miracle.

"Be not deceived by the prejudice of a nation that is at war with Mexico," wrote Riley in one of his letters to his loved ones in America. "For a friendlier and more hospitable people than the Mexicans you will not find on the face of the earth."

Riley was convinced that his actions would be looked upon as a true act of courage by a higher authority than his former commanding officer, Gen. Taylor. He christened his followers "Los San Patricios." According to historians, they fought against their former comrades in most campaigns.

"They deserved the highest praise because they fought with daring bravery," said a Mexican general. "Los San Patricios realized they were not fighting a war for liberty, but one of conquest against fellow Catholics."

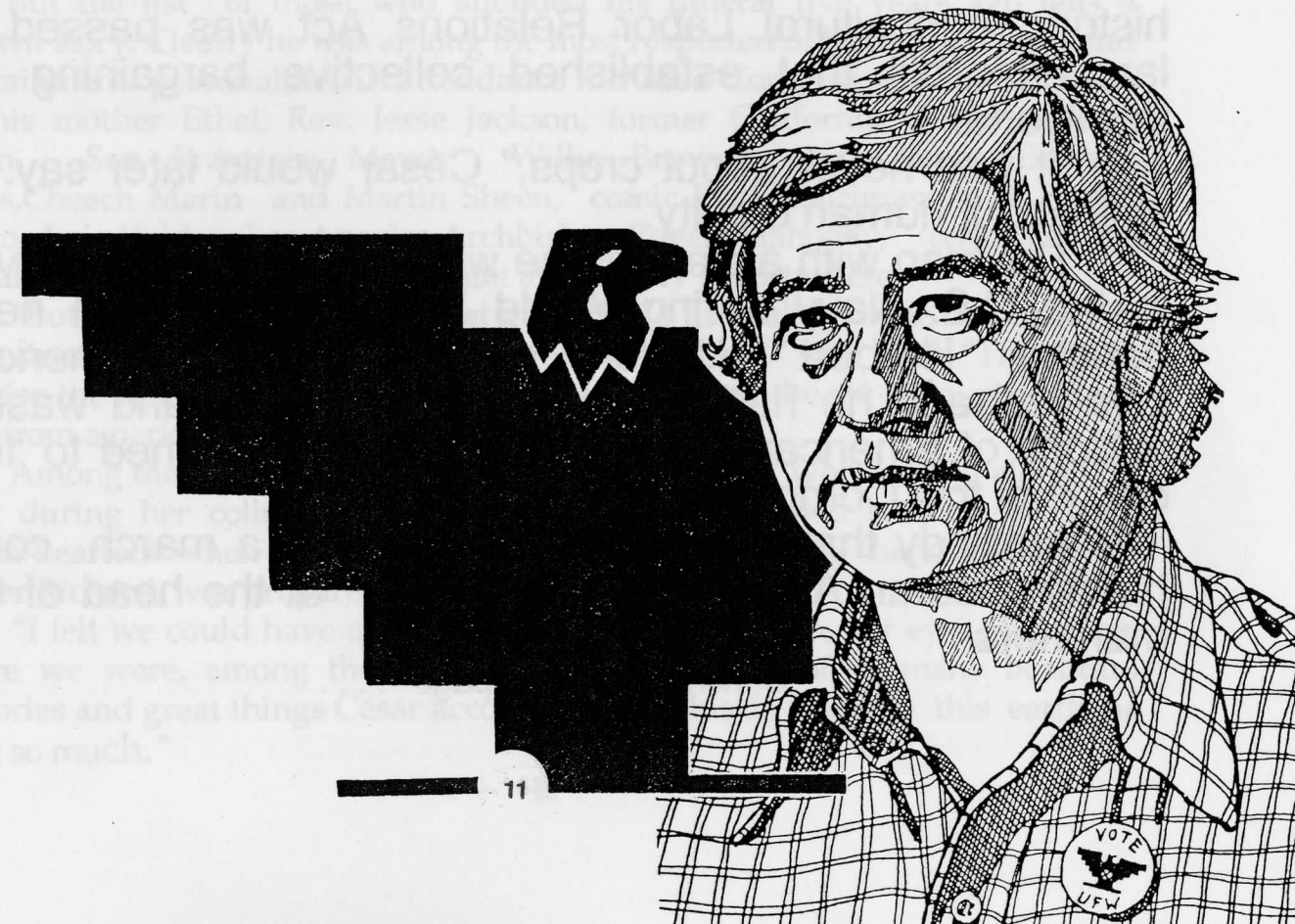
Every September 12, in downtown Mexico City, they are honored with a special military ceremony.

The Mexicans know what their Irish brothers went through during the war. They know that 50 of them, when captured, were hanged and a remaining 16 were branded as deserters with the letter "D" on their faces. The U.S. even offered an excuse for their "betrayal." They were called "confused and bewildered young Irish soldiers who drank heavily" and this motivated them to don the enemy's uniforms and risk their lives fighting against the Americans.

The report never mentioned respect, religion nor Riley as being the leader of the San Patricios.

¡Viva Los Irish!

The Day The Eagle Cried



"I thought he would live forever!"

That was my youngest daughter, Josilyn's, reaction when she heard the news of the demise of César Estrada Chávez, on April 23, 1993.

Her simple expression had been my fantasy-wish for a man who rose from an agricultural valley near Yuma, Arizona to inspire millions. Senator Bobby Kennedy called him, "One of the heroic figures of our time."

In the vernacular, César not only talked the talk, he walked the walk. He also marched. Once he led a 360 mile march from Delano to Sacramento to bring attention to the plight of California's farmworkers, called the most exploited American labor force.

César epitomized the term 'community organizer.' Under the watchful eyes of Saul Alinsky and Fred Ross, he developed into a prize pupil for his mentors.

Charisma flowed through his Chicano veins. He even charmed Gov. Jerry Brown in 1974 to the extent that the historic Agricultural Labor Relations Act was passed, a landmark bill that established collective bargaining for farmworkers.

"It was never about crops," César would later say. "It was about human dignity."

The man with a plan for the workers of the land, served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. When FBI head honcho, Herbert Hoover, questioned his 'American loyalties' and he had César's offices bugged and wasted millions of American tax dollars on a staff assigned to 'find out what this Communist is really after.'

Anybody that ever saw César leading a march could hardly miss an American flag fluttering at the head of the marchers.

Continued on next page

The Day the Eagle Cried

"We are acting under the law, just as our constitution mandates," César often stated. "We're doing an American thing, what's the problem?"

The 'problem' (for ranchers and growers) was that Chávez was simpático to most Americans, regardless of class or color. And when he called for his country to boycott grapes, 17 million consumers followed his suggestion.

"Millions of dollars were lost by California's grape growers," said César's son, Paul. "On July 30, 1970, they gave in to La Huelga. They capitulated and agreed to sign contracts giving campesinos rights and better wages."

It was a sweet day for César, a firm believer in fairness and equality.

My father lent his support to many civil rights marches on behalf of all Americans," said Paul. "It didn't matter if the group was Black, gay, women or whatever, he even demonstrated against the NFL during the football strike!"

President Bill Clinton called César, "A Moses figure."

There is no doubt that it was this man, more than any other Chicano/Latino leader to date, who got the most attention from white America on behalf of La Raza. This quiet, unassuming, almost meek man, did not speak loud nor carried a big stick. But when he spoke, everybody listened. Especially his opponents.

"When he died, even The New York Times carried a front page obit," said Texas columnist Carlos Guerra. "But I literally had to fight with my paper (San Antonio Express) to have César's story on page one!"

But the list of those who attended his funeral five years ago tells a different story. Clearly he was among the most respected of leaders. Political and entertainment personalities in attendance included Congressman Joe Kennedy and his mother Ethel, Rev. Jesse Jackson, former California Governor Jerry Brown, San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown, actors James Edward Olmos, Cheech Marin and Martin Sheen, comic Paul Rodriguez, and movie director Luis Valdez. Los Angeles Archbishop Roger Mahoney, celebrated the funeral mass, held under a big-top tent at the UFW's Forty Acres.

"But the most visible people at my father's funeral were the thousands of campesinos who sacrificed a few days work to be there," said Paul. "They were there for the last march, so to speak, and they walked the six mile procession route from a park to the Forty Acres, tirelessly."

Among them were Josilyn, and her sister, Andrea, who worked alongside César during her college career. They helped with crowd control, but were broken-hearted when the march ended and César's casket, handmade by his brother Richard, was prepared for the final mass.

"I felt we could have marched forever," said Josilyn, her eyes glistening. "There we were, among those not wanting to let go of so many beautiful memories and great things César accomplished in his 66 years on this earth he loved so much."



Deep in the Chicano part of Texas, in the musty cantinas, they still sing about men like Gregorio Cortez. Cortez was immortalized by writer and educator Américo Paredes when he wrote "With His Pistol in His Hand."

Cortez, who shot a sheriff because of a language misunderstanding, became famous when more than 200 Texas Rangers hunted him down along the Texas-Mexico border. But Paredes, whose book was actually a doctoral thesis he wrote to obtain a Ph.D., discovered that the Rangers, along with other concerned citizens, were really hoping to bring in Cortez and cash in on the \$1,000 reward.

On May 5, 1999, Paredes' life came to an end. He was the first Mexican-American to receive a doctorate's from the University of Texas.

"If any Chicano writer could pick his death-date, Cinco de Mayo would certainly rank very high!" said a retired Cal State-Sacramento professor. "You know, Paredes means 'walls' in Spanish, and Américo literally tore down walls that kept early Chicano writers from achieving their rightful place in both academic and literary circles."

Paredes was 84 years-old when he died in Austin. In 1958 he ushered in an era of revisionism by refuting mainstream Anglo-dominated histories of Texas. His Cortez book became a movie starring a young James Edward Olmos. It wasn't long before the Chicano activists of the early 60s discovered Paredes, making him an early underground Chicano celebrity.

Américo gave literary legitimacy to the corrido (ballad) with his thesis. He debunked the pseudo folklore long expounded by anglo academics in the southwest.

Born into a ranching family in Brownsville, Paredes learned about corridos from vaqueros (cowboys) on both sides of the border. Upon his graduation from a junior

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Con Su Pluma En Su Mano

college he became a reporter for the Brownsville Herald.

He wrote a novel, about Tejanos, 'George Washington Gomez' but it went unpublished for fifty years.

Literary activity by early Chicano/Latinos, came to an abrupt halt when the Great Depression hit and Spanish-surnamed people, regardless of their birth place, were made economic scapegoats. This led to a "repatriation" act and it forced a large segment of people into Mexico. Many of them spoke little or no Spanish and some had no clue of their mother country's culture.

Writers like Américo began to write in both English and Spanish. Paredes and other writers expressed a very pronounced and politicized Mexican-American sensibility.

During the 1930s and '40s, Paredes was a frequent contributor of poetry in Spanish, English and 'Spanglish' format that was published in several Southwest newspapers and magazines.

Before Selena, there was a Tejana songstress named Chelo Silva, whose raspy voice told of romance and love in some very unique compositions, many of them written by Paredes.

Silva was Paredes first wife and he often performed with her. According to the Paredes' biography, they had a repertoire of more than 500 songs.

While in the U.S. Army, he worked on the Stars and Stripes covering the Pacific Theater, and also the Japanese war criminal trials. It was there he met and married Uruguyan and Japanese Amelia Nagamine, who gave him four children.

After he wrote the Cortez story, the University was eager to publish it as a book, but he was told to revise it and 'tone it down'.

The University thought so much of Paredes that he was asked to join the faculty. Even Mexico, who seldom recognizes Chicano inspired creativity, honored him with the prestigious Order of the Aztec Eagle award.

This is the highest honor awarded to foreigners by Mexico. They must consider you to be unique in your field for such an honor. Among Paredes' other honors was a Guggenheim Fellowship. One special tribute best describes the love fellow artists had for this unique individual.

Tish Hinojosa, the singer from Austin, created something very special for Paredes. She composed a corrido in his honor and entitled it, 'Con Su Pluma en Su Mano.'

The ballad serves as an epitaph for Américo Paredes, the singing Tejano scholar. It translates into 'with his pen in his hand.'

Is California's Flag RACIST?

First flag drawn with berry juice
on a woman's petticoat.



Recognize this "lone star?"
Yep, you saw it on
the Texas flag!

The "oso" (bear) reflects the
rebels' nickname of themselves.
They were bears snatching every-
thing in California regardless of
others' rights.

Do you know why California's flag boasts a bear ?

Read on. But first, the rest of the story.

There is a political and vocal battle in the South over the Confederate Flag. Again.

For decades, most Blacks and some Whites have argued that Jim Crow's symbol has got to go. Southern gentlemen and their ladies say that the flag is simply a "symbol of Southern heritage."

What happened to fried chicken? The flag in question reminds many of the small statue of a Black with a red cap used as a horse-tie in the Old South.

Ever since the Union set the South on fire, the good 'ol Southern legislators stuck their flag on many of the Southern states' official flags. It was another way of saying, "The South shall rise again!"

When Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall struck down the segregation laws, Confederate Flag manufacturers made a killing. It was simply a way of telling the rest of America to take a hike with their integration laws.

During Martin Luther King's holiday, marches were staged in protest of South Carolina's refusal to take down the Confederate Flag from its capitol flag pole. Supposedly, it went up in 1962 to commemorate the Civil War centennial. It's still flying and it's still causing grief.

It's like flying a British flag over our nation's capitol. It's an insult to the many fine people of all colors who are trying to bring closure to one of the darkest of U.S. History chapters. It's not heritage, it's hypocrisy.

In 1846, before the U.S. declared war on Mexico, California's political situation was in a state of great flux. Rumors of an American takeover of the state and of Mexican preventive action were rampant. About the only sure thing happening was the heightened tensions between the Mexican citizens and the Anglo community, who

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Is California's Flag Racist?

believed that they would soon be attacked.

Enter John Charles Fremont, another Southern gentleman (b. Savannah, Ga.) who had been ordered out of California by Mexican authorities, but continued to defy rules. His presence in the Sacramento Valley helped provoke the officials. It also caused the settlers to talk belligerently of hostilities with the Mexican government.

That summer, a party of Anglo settlers seized a herd of horses bound south for the Mexican militia. That defying act provided the courage to another party led by William B. Ide and Ezekiel Merritt, who rode into Sonoma and took General Mariano Vallejo prisoner. They also captured Vallejo's brother and both taken to Sutter's Fort in Sacramento, where they were subjected to indignities. Anglo soldiers intimidated and harassed them and would refer to both Vallejos as "greasers."

Never mind that General Vallejo was among the most pro-American leaders of California at the time. He always sided with those expressing independence or statehood.

Meanwhile, back in Sonoma, Ide's renegades raised their homemade flag of their "new republic," a petticoat with a star and a grizzly bear painted with berry juice. The model for our flag was raised on June 14, 1846.

There are other documented atrocities committed under the bear flag. Instigators and followers like Kit Carson, whose men killed unarmed Californio José de Los Reyes Berryesa and his twin nephews. These murders had no 'military value' whatsoever!

The Bear Flaggers unleashed a reign of terror mistreating, raping, killing and maiming both Californios and Native Americans, most of the victims were innocent bystanders.

The bear on the flag is the state's symbol of heritage. A very bitter one.



Heroes The Fourth of July Forgot ...

The Fourth of July, as we know it, may have never happened.

Without Hispanic intervention during the War of Independence, there would be no holiday.

Facts snubbed by most textbooks in schools lead to a blunder of historical proportions - few know that Hispanics, are in reality, co-founders of this nation.

It's time to add a tad of brown to the red, white and blue of the Fourth.

There were many heroes and heroines during young America's fight for freedom. But the startling fact remains that somehow from the actual time of skirmishes and struggles, to printing deadlines, many historians forgot to include the non-colonists who helped win the war.

Take Spaniard General Bernardo de Galvez, for example, who governed a large area of North America with headquarters in New Orleans at the time of the war. When America declared its independence, Spain offered to assist in the effort against England, long an enemy of the Spanish.

The task fell on Gen. Galvez who organized an army that may have resembled today's crack Army Rangers. They knew their stuff, these Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Mexicans and of course, Native Americans. Yesterday's army was ready for the Redcoats.

Immediately Gen. Galvez set out to cover the British held South for Gen. George Washington, who was having problems with his men up North. His men threatened to stop fighting without compensation.

In one big swoop, Gen. Galvez and his gallant men

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The Heroes the Fourth Forgot

captured five British forts along the Mississippi Valley and what is now Mobile Bay. They also seized eleven British ships and relieved them of their cargoes; rerouting the supplies to the Washington-led forces, now stranded in Valley Forge without much assistance from the locals.

You must remember that about only one-third of the Colonists took-up arms in the independence effort. This led to the early government accepting help from other countries, but it was both Hispanic Worlds, old and the new, that provided most of it.

Gen. Galvez not only provided the troops with arms, gunpowder, clothing, and food, but also with money. The latter coming from philanthropic women living in Cuba. They offered jewelry, heirlooms, and gold coins to help pay the soldiers.

In a battle that historian Orwin Rush has called "a decisive factor in the outcome of the revolution and one of the most brilliantly executed battles of the war" - Gen. Galvez and his multi-ethnic forces took Pensacola, the most important British stronghold on the Gulf of Mexico after a two-month campaign. So fierce was the fighting that even Gen. Galvez was wounded in this decisive struggle.

This crippling blow became the Spanish straw that broke the Birts' back. For it was in the South that the Redcoats were preparing to re-group and head north to Yorktown.

Instead, Gen. Galvez stripped their ships of supplies and sent them to the Colonists. The battle at Yorktown became the final episode of the American Revolution. The rest, as they say, is history. History without Hispanic contributions, that is.

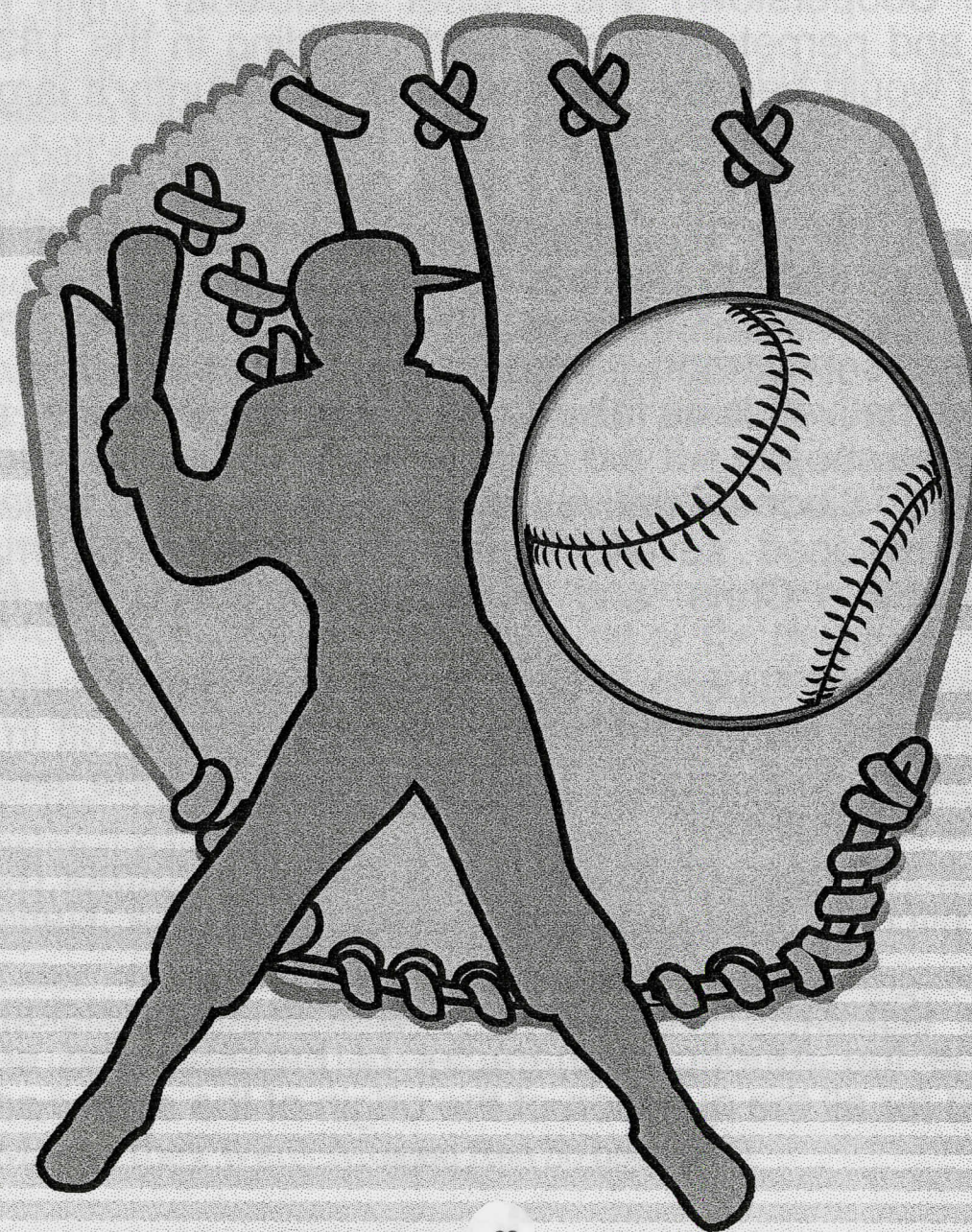
Too many Americans of Hispanic, Mexican, and Latino descent have gone to their graves without knowing what great sacrifices their ancestors endured to assure America of its independence. Hispanic men and women played a tremendous part in the founding of this nation. Perhaps someday they will be recognized as legitimate heroes and heroines.

Maybe they too will be officially invited to the national Fourth of July table. They certainly earned their place, in spite of omission from official documents, textbooks and curricula.

In his 1796 farewell address, Gen. George Washington told the nation, "I hold the maxim no less applicable to public than to private affairs, that honesty is the best policy."

Let's be honest about the Fourth of July, America.

Baseball is NOT
an American
Original!



Abner Doubleday and Cooperstown are an American invention. Baseball is not. For starters, Cooperstown is not the original site of the birth of baseball.

Try a few thousand miles out in the Atlantic Ocean. Before Columbus and the rest of the European "discoverers" of the Americas, Cuban natives played a similar game and called it "batos" - now you know where we got the word "bat" - from.

The Cooperstown and Abner Doubleday myth was created and perpetuated by Albert Spalding in the 1830s. Spalding would become the owner of the country's largest sporting goods business in the early 1900s.

"Mr. Doubleday did not invent baseball," writes Dan Gutman in his book, "Baseball Babylon." "If anything, baseball invented Mr. Doubleday!"

So, all this Yankee-yakity-yak you hear about American servicemen introducing baseball to the Caribbean natives is as false as a Cuban cigar made at a local smoke shop!

Cuba's "Siboney" natives and Puerto Rico's "Caguana" people developed several forms of a ball game many seasons before Chris and Company put out to sea from Spain.

"It was the Siboneys who called their game 'batos,'" writes another author, Professor James D. Cockcroft in his book, "Latinos in Beisbol." "They even used a crude version of a bat and a ball too!"

Cockcroft goes on to say that Spalding, a former major league pitcher, later became president of the National League.

"He (Spalding) appointed a special commission to determine the American character of baseball and settle once and for all the question of the origin of the sport," said

Continued on next page . . .

Beisbol Is Not U.S. Invention

Cockcroft.

What Spalding's cronies found did not make him a very happy commissioner. They discovered that different native (Indian) civilizations of Central America and Mexico played games utilizing bats and balls and it was them who introduced the game into what is now the American Southwest.

"All this happened long before the Mayflower docked at Plymouth Rock," said Cockcroft during an education conference in Sacramento.

"Then to add insult to Spalding's injuries, the same commission told him that several U.S. historians had traced some of baseball's roots to a British children's game, also played with a bat-like instrument and a ball."

Ironically, the game the British kids played was called "rounders" and played mostly by little girls.

"In 1907 the specially appointed commission handed down its clumsily compiled and completely fabricated Doubleday-Cooperstown legend," said Cockcroft. "Baseball was now truly the national pastime of the country, but the main reason for the acceptance of this worse than fairy-tale version was a combination of society's nationalism and plain racism."

Baseball has more skeletons in the proverbial closet than Big Mac McGuire has home runs this. One of the skeletons is about the first Black players. Color of skin kept many outstanding players out of the majors. Before Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier, there was a dark Cuban, Esteban "Steve" Bellan who played for the Troy Haymakers of the National Association of Professional Baseball Players (NAPBP) in 1871.

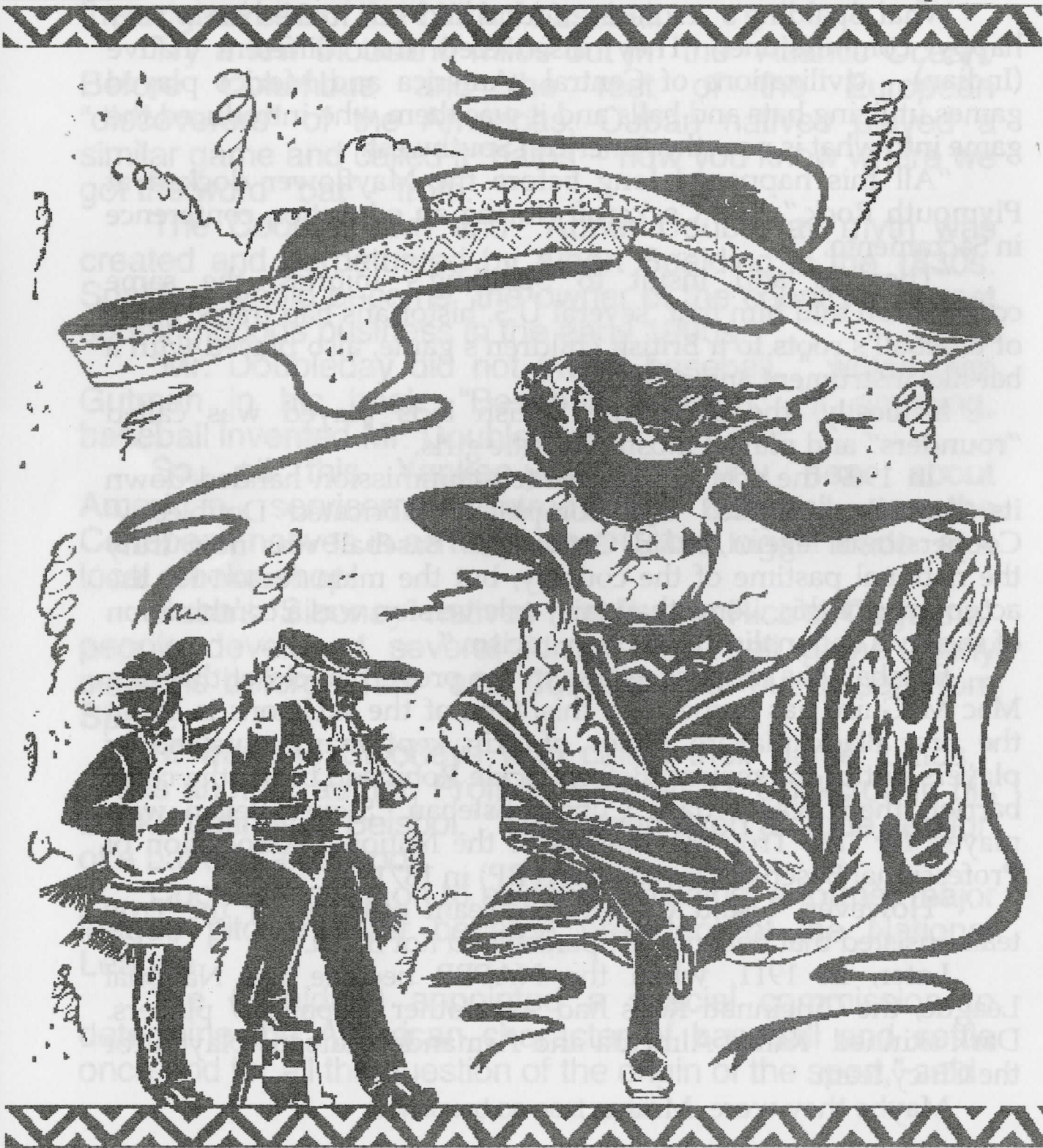
"However," said Cockcroft. "Team officials for the Troy team insisted that Bellan was Spanish and not Black."

Later, in 1911, when the NAPBP became the National League, the Cincinnati Reds had two other "Spanish" players. Dark skinned Rafael Almeida and Armando Marsans played for the Cincy team.

Maybe they were Moors.

America's Biggest Fiesta!

NATIONAL HISPANIC MONTH



It may not be like pulling teeth from someone's mouth, but celebrating ethnic holidays can be just as painful. Not physically, but spiritually, it's a real downer.

Take for example, the people Nat'l Hispanic Heritage Month is suppose to honor, Latinos. A random sampling taken at malls, libraries, high-schools and university campuses proved to be a disaster.

"Hispanic Month?" asked a high school senior. "Oh yeah, Budweiser sponsors it, right?"

"National what for whom?" came from a community college student assistant. "No, can't say I've ever heard about this holiday, sorry."

"What? Another special holiday for Hispanics?" an irate caller to a library asked. "What will it take to have a white folks holiday?"

Enough already. Benightedness is nothing to brag about. In any language. But who is to blame for many Americans being unenlightened when it comes to being informed? Or worse, misinformed.

"Most Americans and Canadians in general are not knowledgeable about the cultural heritage and character of their neighbors to the south," said author Boye Lafayette de Mente. "When they think of great cultural accomplishments, they think of Europe, when they think of the exotic, they think of the Orient. Unknown to them, they are overlooking on their own doorstep some of the most unusual and fascinating countries in the world."

De Mente tells about the Latin and South American countries that are mere hours away by air.

"Many Americans, for example, see Mexico as a culture of tacos, tortillas, over-sized sombreros, leather sandals, bullfights, ancient ruins and revolutionary art," said de Mente. "But these are only minor manifestations of their

Continued on next page

Nat'l Hispanic Heritage Month

cultural achievements."

Meanwhile back in the U.S. of A., lame Latino celebrations barely told others of the real reason why it is important to honor diversity. Besides, it helps in the national healing process.

"Healing? When were we wounded?" asked an alternative high school teacher in California. "Aren't you guys overdoing this 'ethnic-bit' by dividing yourselves?"

Did we mention that many Americans are misinformed?

Thanks mainly to the omission of both Black and Brown achievements from school textbooks, we have developed several generations of badly informed individuals.

"It's tough enough to educate," said a university professor. "How long do you think it'll take us to reeducate?"

Remember that Texas incident about a Black man dragged over county roads by three suspects? The Ku Klux Klan held a rally at the town's courthouse square calling for "what is right."

"Yes, and the grand dragon of the KKK also stated that 'God stood with them!'" said the professor. "If that doesn't sound scary, what does? As a country, we have never come together at the same table, we still have a long, long way to travel and the racial road keeps getting longer and harder to navigate, it seems."

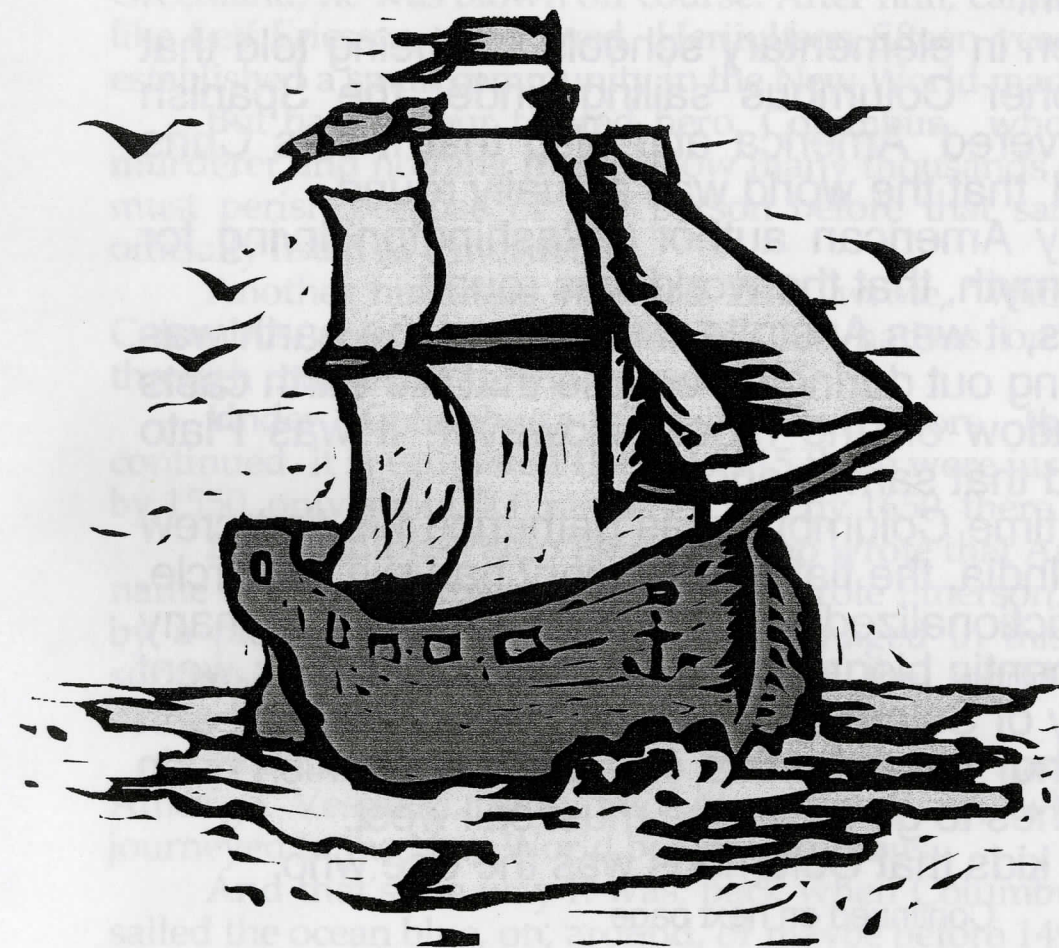
Celebrating 'national-months' such as the one for spotlighting Hispanics is a good start. But only if all of us who believe in what this country stands for, become involved. It won't do any good if a mere handful take action.

"Sammy Sosa in September is a good example," said a baseball fan and community college student. "With those healthy cuts he took and sending balls all over Chicago, Sammy was proving that minority players have *mucho* talent."

Nothing looked better than both Sosa and home run-king Mark McGuire praising and hugging each other. It was good that it came during the month set aside to honor people like Sosa.

A Native American once said that the only way to get attention from anyone not your skin color was to whack him on the head with a two-by-four! Hopefully it was a Native metaphor for a baseball bat being in the right hands.

Columbus Took a Wrong Turn ...



Is America toasting the wrong person on Columbus Day?

John Cabot, says England, was the first European to feast his eyes on the New World.

"Englishmen have been in the forefront of defending Cabot's claims because he sailed under their flag," said TV reporter turned author, Richard Shenkman in his book, "Legends, Lies & Cherished Myths of American History."

Second question, is America honoring the wrong Italian?

Yes, John Cabot was actually an Italian, Giovanni Caboto. Mama mía! When will historians, past or present, get it right?

Oh yes, then there are all those Norsemen, waiting for some recognition.

Still, children in elementary schools are being told that it was Christopher Columbus sailing under the Spanish flag, that 'discovered' America and also that it was Chris who 'discovered' that the world was actually round.

Thank early American author Washington Irving for the Columbus myth, that the world was round.

For starters, it was Aristotle who proved the earth was not flat by pointing out during an eclipse that the earth casts a spherical shadow on the moon. However, it was Plato who popularized that same concept.

So, by the time Columbus was gathering his first crew for a voyage to India, the flat-earth-theory had run full circle. But Irving, in a fictionalized account of Columbus that many took for an authentic biography, wrote that Columbus went to the University of Salamanca with his "theory" of the earth really being round. To prove this, he told the Spanish brain trust, if one wishes to go east, one must sail west.

So why tell kids that Columbus was the one who

Continued on next page

Columbus Took a Wrong Turn

proved the world was round? Or that he 'discovered' this land.

Also, they still tell the little ones that in order to finance the discovery trip for Columbo, Queen Isabella had to hock her jewels! Oh well, they probably figure, what's another white lie?

And so it goes. Year after year. Columbus Day after Columbus Day. Will the truth ever be known by everybody?

"Cabot claimed to have landed on Nova Scotia in 1497, a full year before Columbus touched the mainland of North America," writes Shenkman. "

The list of Norsemen who also claimed to have come to America long before Chris begin to look for India in all the wrong places is quite formidable.

Historian Samuel Eliot Morison calls Norseman Biarni Heriulfson the "number one, indubitable European discoverer of America."

Heriulfson's cruise into unknown waters and eventually land, came about by accident in A.D. 985. On a voyage from Iceland to Greenland, he was blown off course. After him, came more Norsemen like Leif Ericsson, followed Heriulfson fifteen years later and even established a small community in the New World made famous later.

But back to our tainted hero, Columbus, who Arawaks call a murderer and nothing more. How many thousands of human beings must perish because of one person before that same individual is officially listed as a murderer?

Another historian, Howard Zinn, wrote, "Within two years of Columbus arrival, half of the 250,000 natives on Haiti had died through murder, mutilation or suicide."

Under Columbus's Spanish successors the mistreatment continued. It is estimated that by 1515 there were just 50,000 natives, by 1550, only about 500 remained and by 1650, there were none.

It was Ralph Waldo Emerson who wrote that America wears the name of a thief. "America, you see," wrote Emerson. "Was named so by a pickle dealer in Seville, who managed in this lying world to suppress Columbus and baptize half the world with his own dishonest name."

America was named by a mapmaker who had been misled by Amerigo Vespucci, who told him it was he, who had actually journeyed to the New World before Columbus.

And that's the way it was, back when Columbus and company sailed the ocean blue, on, around, or maybe before 1492.

BEHIND HISTORY'S HEADLINES

(Educator-Activist-Writer)

Porras is a freelance writer/speaker with life experiences as varied as his topics.

Born on the Texas-Mexico border, raised in a *barrio*, educated in an all Chicano-school and working in the California fields gave him a creative background still utilized in many of his columns about *campesino*-life.

He credits his late father, José, an early activist, businessperson, and school board member, with having taught him to "love reading." At San Felipe H.S., in Del Rio, TX, Porras served as class president all four years.

His late *madrecita*, Pepa, instilled in him family values and pride. Porras served as her caretaker during her Alzheimers period until her death at 92.

In 1956, Porras and his class organized and carried out a "sit-in" to change school policy. He was elected his college freshman class vice-president at Sul Ross State University, first Chicano to hold such an office.

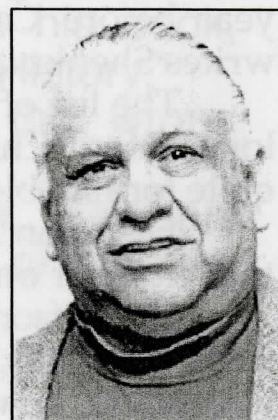
The Wall Street Journal honored him with a journalism fellowship to the University of Texas and the Mott Foundation presented him a fellowship to San José State to acquire his M.A.

With grandparents and other relatives in San José, Porras spent most of his summers in California. He managed to cultivate a warm and productive friendship with the late Chicano leader, César Chavez, for whom Porras designed the funeral poster.

"There was never any doubt where I would spend my adult life," says Porras, now a doting grandpa to Star Zehari, and Jah Sol Amaru, daughter and son of his two oldest children, Dominick and Yaya, respectively.

Porras' wife, Josie, is a Winters Middle School teacher. A younger son, José, is a graphics artist and his "baby girl," Josilyn, is a senior at UCSB.

Los Porras live in Sacramento.



Andy Porras

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