

JUNE 1996

THE LATINO MAGAZINE

VOL. 6 NO. 12

EL ANDAR

*can i slip an S
closer to your breast perhaps take an L use its elbow
to rub the softness of your hair there we have the darkness of these empty
sheets to stretch out & hide in to use as our blanket maybe i might drop M's somewhere
around your ear, let their legs reach & hook themselves dangle off your ankles V's could roll
down your back like beads of velvet we could end the night hair falling onto my face
like T's as you and I laugh together clutching hands in a night
spend under paper white sheets sweating letters and sex
- Adrian Aronstein, Two Shop Pies*

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WHY DO WE DO IT?

I just finished reading the April issue of *El Andar*. Although I had seen it around before, this was the first time I had read any issue. I am so glad I did. As a Journalism major at San Jose State University, I often find myself asking the same questions of myself that were asked in the section titled "About this issue..." Questions like, Why am I doing this? It certainly isn't for the money. I am not laboring under

the false pretense that riches await me upon graduating with a Journalism degree. So why do this?

I think reading your magazine for the first time helped me to answer that question. I want to write about people's lives. Not just people who are deemed important by mainstream society or the mass media. I want to write about people in my community.

That community includes farm workers, school teachers, policemen, gang members and CEOs: it includes all people! Of

all colors, of all economic backgrounds. That is why I am so thankful that papers like the *El Andar* exist. If you don't report on the lives of these people, who will? How will we understand?

I want to personally thank the publisher and the staff of *El Andar* for providing a positive role model for a young, aspiring Latino journalist like myself to look up to!!

LARRY E. HERNANDEZ
San José

MORE SOCIAL ISSUES

First of all, I want to congratulate you for your fine publication of *El Andar*.

I occasionally read your paper and it seems to fit all issues concerning Latinos. I just want to comment on what I would like to see in every publication of *El Andar*; that is, a segment stressing social issues affecting Latinos in general (e.g. why we live in ghettos, why we get the worse

jobs, why we are misrepresented in the U.S./state congress, just to mention a few.)

There are many social issues affecting our communities that need to be discussed seriously by professional people to find solutions to them if we want to educate. I believe via *El Andar* we can accomplish a whole lot!

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to express this feeling on behalf of all Latinos throughout the United States!!

ROLANDO E. VELÁSQUEZ
Soledad, CA

¡CIUDADANÍA SÍ! ¡ISADORA NO!

Siempre que veo *El Andar* en los comercios tomo una copia porque me que sus artículos son interesantes.

La razón por la que le escribo ahora es porque deseo comunicar que casi todo está muy bien excepto la columna de Isadora. A mi me parece que este tipo de preguntas y respuestas tienen cabida mas bien en otro tipo de publicaciones pero no en *El Andar*, que puede considerarse un periódico para toda la familia.

La columna de Isadora es innecesaria y hasta vulgar. No deseamos este tipo de literatura para nuestro jóvenes y hasta niños que pudieran leer su revista. *El Andar* debe ser ante todo una publicación que alimente positivamente el alma de nuestro pueblo en este país, y no debe prestarse a este tipo de literatura que mas bien sirve para corromper nuestra gente.

Yo sugeriría publicaran más artículos que nos inviten a superarnos como ciudadanos o residentes en este país. Artículos que mas bien nos hagan tomar conciencia de que sin una educación formal, sea como padres, como hijos, como fuerza laboral, no podemos llegar a ningún lado y estaremos siempre expuestos a ser atacados como minoría o como personas indeseables.

MARÍA RAMÍREZ
Watsonville, CA.

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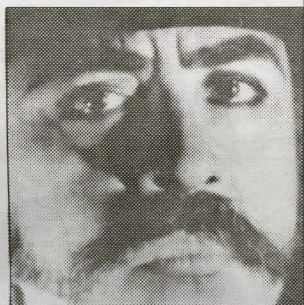
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18 THEY RANT! THEY SLAM! THEY'RE POETS!

Poetry is back, and it's got an attitude.

REAL LIFE ON STAGE 4

The new play, *Watsonville*, tells of struggle in our town.



28 IMMIGRANT DEBATE TURNED AROUND

The tables turn when undocumented North Americans settle in Mexican towns.



Chupacabras, page 8

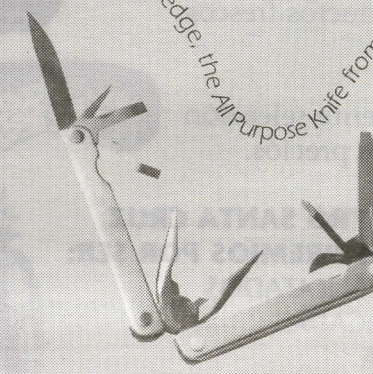
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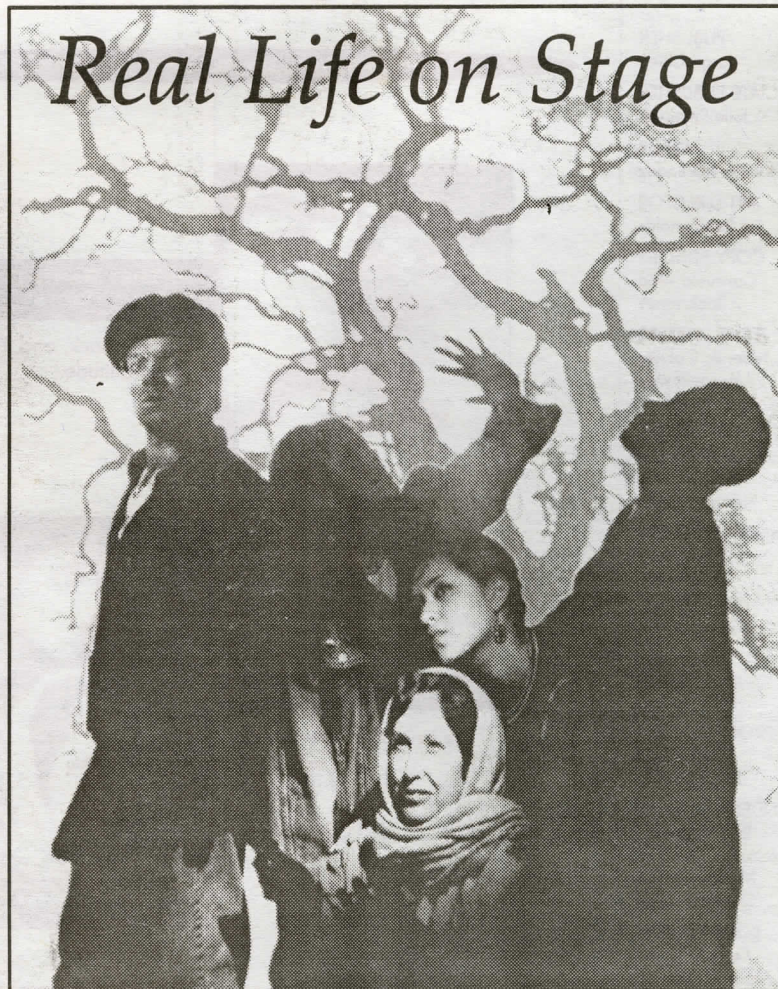
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"Watsonville: Some Place Not Here"

Adrian Vargas

What do a major labor struggle, an earthquake, and a miracle have in common? Watsonville, California, has experienced all three within the past eight years. This setting provides the dramatic backdrop for Chicana playwright Cherríe Moraga's latest play "Watsonville," currently playing in San Francisco. The play opens the coastal town's history como una piñata, effectively revealing the treasures of its Mexican townspeople. Rather than treating the events in sequential order, the play intertwines them with a mythical symbolism that exposes political realities and individual passions.

The story begins with the cannery workers' strike against the Green Giant food conglomerate. The struggle of families to survive the exploitation of greedy business interests is illuminated by the workers' unity. The audience comes to know Dolores Valle, who puts up with a borracho husband while she works at the cannery to make a living. Dolores, strongly portrayed by Lee Garay Toney, unites with her good friends Lucha, the fired-up indocumentada (Minerva García) and señora Robles, humorously played by Vivis, to strike for their just demands. Enter Amparo, a gay health worker from a community clinic that takes a stand by providing free medical services for the strikers, and you have a dynamic exploration of both the traditional and modern roles of Mexican women and their politics of solidarity.

The situation heats up when the cannery bosses use the strike breaking tactic of bringing in scab laborers, mostly undocumented and exploited Mexicans themselves. The union organizer, Chente, finds hope for the strike with the involvement of Juan Cunningham, a former church padre schooled in the theology of liberation who has since given up the priesthood to become a community organizer. Dolores has trouble trusting Juan because he has questioned his faith in God and, according to her, become a comunista. Along the way there is interesting dialogue on the political and cultural identity of La Raza. At one point Moraga asks "Where is home, carnal? Where is home for the dispossessed Chicana?"

After praying to a virgen for intervention to win the strike, which after a month has left the workers impoverished and weary, Dolores goes to the lake for inspiration. There La Virgen de Guadalupe miraculously appears to her on the bark of an ancient tree, in a visual stylization of light and design. She receives a divine message that will bear on the outcome of the strike. She asks Juan to bless the tree in a religious ceremony to divinely turn the fortunes of the strikers. The result is a complex confrontation between a stuffy and detached monsignor and the questioning Juan, who is critical of the local church's lack of support for the strikers.

Cherríe Moraga's poetic portrayal of the events in Watsonville takes the art of teatro Chicano in a new and challenging direction, catapulting her into position as one of the foremost Chicana playwrights of our time. At one point the play pays tribute to the roots of Chicano theater with the workers putting on an acto, performed to raise the consciousness of the community about their struggle. The play has the content of an acto, but with deeper human emotions and inventive mythical, socially relevant twists to the plot, artistically woven into the two-hour production. While the length seemed a bit too long, the production's visual and musical spectacle continually generated interest and was thoroughly entertaining. It was an excellent blending of art, politics, and the search for cultural and individual identity.

Watsonville Some Place Not Here is showing through June 30 at the Brava Theater Center (formerly the York Theater), located at 2789 24th Street in the Mission district of San Francisco. Box Office: 415/487-5401.

Adrian Vargas is the Artistic Director of Teatro Familia Aztlán and has been involved in Chicano Theatre as a director, actor, and playwright for over 25 years. He has a B.A. in Drama from San Jose State University

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An award-winning bilingual cultural center and marketplace showcasing Latino lifestyle on the Internet. It helps the voices of the Latino community be heard and influences the World Wide Web with our pimienta y color.

Electric Mercado, winner of Hispanic Magazine's Hot Latino Website award, offers over 150 pages of beautiful, bilingual features and Latino crafts and arts, including:

- **ARTE Y DIVERSIONES** includes a gallery for visual artists, authors, performing artists, theater groups and music section with articles, reviews and a trivia quiz.
- **LOS PUESTOS**, our marketplace, is dedicated to helping Latino artisans promote and sell their work worldwide.
- **LATINO JUVENTUD** offers a place for Latino youth to express their creativity, and includes participation of Barrios Unidos, an organization teaching alternatives to youth violence.
- **COMIDA CORRIDA** invites readers to savor the art and lore of Latino food, with recipes and stories from the chefs.
- **EVENTOS Y CELEBRACIONES** lists festivals, lectures and nightlife across the U.S.
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Who do I contact for more info?



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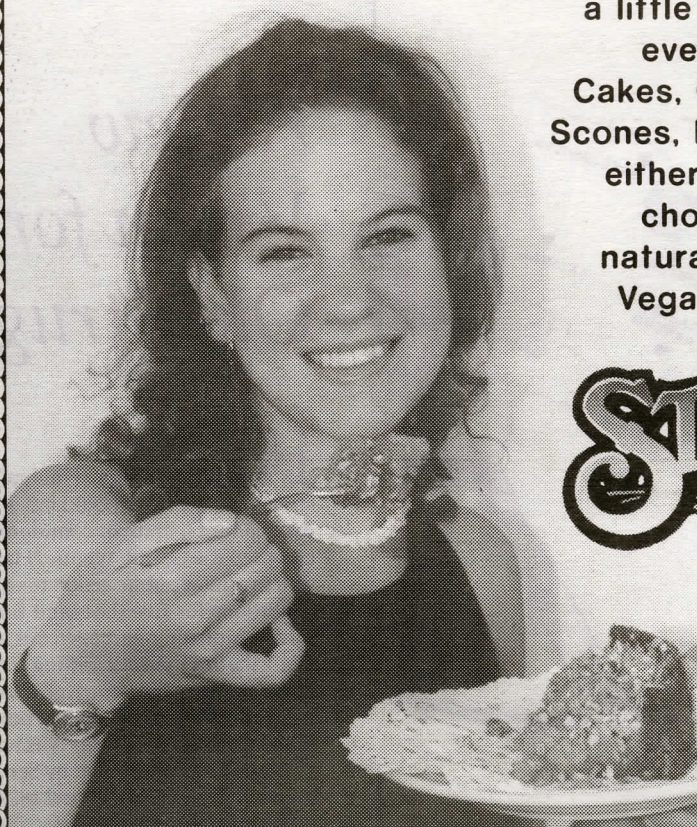
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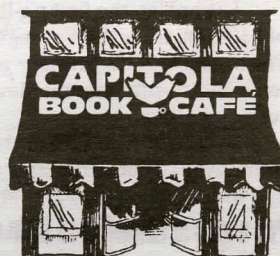
Dan Baum

author of SMOKE AND MIRRORS

The War on Drugs and the Politics of Failure reads the subtitle of the most comprehensive account yet of 30 years of a failed war which Baum insists has destroyed lives, strangled the courts and exploded the prisons (as well as annually costing more than the Departments of State, Interior and Commerce combined). Richly researched with extensive interviews, this is a critical book for anyone interested in this vital topic.

"A must-read, an awesome reporting job, and a story well told." Nathan McCall

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THE WAR
ON DRUGS
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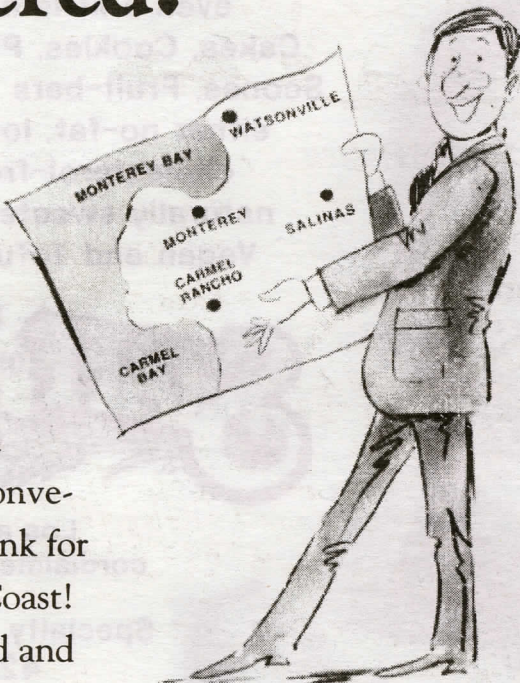
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VOCES

Community Views

Matthew J. Janus

A New Vision for an Old Struggle

Huelga, Huelga, Huelga!" rang through the streets of downtown Oakland on May 30 as four hundred janitors, church, community and labor leaders crowded the Grand Avenue/Harrison Street intersection in a final public action to call for improved work conditions for five thousand Bay Area janitors. Janitors brandishing garbage cans and brooms marched along the busy streets, settling at the intersection where they sat down, blocking traffic for ten minutes. Eleven supporters were arrested as police attempted to disperse the crowd. But this was just the beginning.

Janitors represented by Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 1877 walked off their jobs on Monday June 2, after rejecting the last proposal by the janitorial contractors. "The contractors wouldn't offer anything near an acceptable proposal," said Local 1877 President Mike Garcia. "Our members are fighting to provide medical care for their children and raise their families out of poverty. But the contractors aren't offering serious proposals at the bargaining table. Instead, our members report, they are responding with a campaign of threats and intimidation."

Members of Local 1877 of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), which represents 75% of the janitorial work force in the South and East Bay commercial office and high tech markets, have been struggling to negotiate a new contract with the janitorial contractors of client companies. The SEIU's proposed Master Contract proposes to regain the standards of wages and health care benefits that its janitors once received. According to the SEIU, approximately two-thirds of these janitors work for below poverty wages. Many have to wait up to five years for family health care benefits and are often forced to skip meal and rest breaks to meet increasing workloads.

The union had hoped that by employing progressive tactics, such as periodic informational campaigns and public actions similar to those in San Jose and Oakland, they could avert strike situations. This policy was followed throughout May, to no avail. The janitors' current contract expired on May 31. Accordingly, Local 1877 intensified its efforts to draw public attention and support in the final week of May with the two major public actions.

According to Marcy Rein, media coordinator for the SEIU, it is the spirited participation of the janitors themselves that continues to propel the campaign. "Both demonstrations were very colorful," remarks Rein, "people brought their families with them." Vigorous chanting and singing in Spanish in response to the actions in San Jose and Oakland underscored union members' commitment to their cause.

To date, the contractors for the client companies which employ the janitors have not been willing to address the SEIU's demands. Local 1877 will again fan the flames of discontent in June by serving client companies with strike notices.

The strategic strike will hit different sites every day. "Our goal is to disrupt the everyday work of the contractors until we can get an acceptable agreement," said Jon Barton, organizing director for the contract campaign. Local 1877 received strike sanctions from the Alameda, Contra Costa, San Mateo and Santa Clara Central Labor Councils. "Thousands of workers in the Bay area could potentially be involved," said Barton.

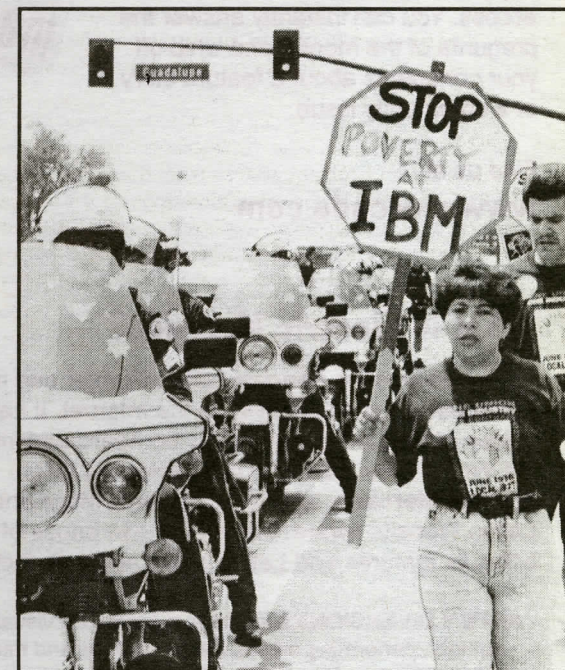
Latino (Net) Surfers

LatinoNet, the first on-line network developed by Latinos for the Latino community, has received a grant of \$100,000 from the Carnegie Corporation of New York for the expansion of its on-line information services. The organization's primary goal is to connect the Latino community through state-of-the-art technological systems and to promote the development of collaborative relationships among community-based organizations serving Latinos.

Among the options at the disposal of LatinoNet users are low-cost teleconference discussion forums with prominent Latino advocates and thinkers, access to timely and current information from Latino news sources and links to databases and libraries developed by and for Latinos.

Pay a visit to LatinoNet on their web page:

<http://members.aol.com/lnet03/latinonet/ln.welcome.html>



*According to their union,
approximately two-thirds of
the janitors work for
below-poverty wages.*

S.F. Noncitizen Voting Initiative

A Bay Area group known as the Immigrant Rights Movement (MDI) is currently involved in a campaign to collect 10,500 signatures from San Francisco County voters to place a proposed ordinance on the ballot for the November '96 elections. The first section of the San Francisco Immigrant Voting Rights Initiative, as it is called, proposes "that all non-citizens living in the City and County of San Francisco, and who otherwise would fulfill all other legal requirements to vote except that of citizenship, will be allowed to vote in all municipal elections for Mayor, Board of Supervisors, Board of Education, Community College Governing Board and local ballot initiatives."

The MDI is launching this bold initiative as part of their efforts to create positive campaigns for immigrants that will do more than simply defend them from constant attacks from the political right. According to the MDI, if the ballot is passed in November it could "create a movement around the real issues concerning immigrants: the need to include them and make them participatory of our society rather than the scapegoats." By promoting an initiative that would give the vote to noncitizens in San Francisco, who contribute to the local economy as workers and tax payers, the MDI puts immigrants on the offensive for a change.

The initiative has met with strong resistance from several sources. California Secretary of State Bill Jones has vowed to fight the proposal on the grounds of constitutionality. Jones's position is that voting is a privilege open only to legal citizens, and that this initiative will increase incidences of voting fraud.

San Francisco Registrar of Voters Germaine Q. Wong is also strongly opposed to the initiative. On May 1, he filed a Declaration in support of attempts to block the Initiative from getting on the November ballot.

In order to put the initiative on the November ballot, the MDI must have their 10,500 signatures from supporters by July 22. Even if the ballot is not passed, however, the MDI, which was formed in 1994 to fight Proposition 187, will continue to spearhead positive campaigns in behalf of the severely underrepresented immigrant population in San Francisco.



Who's the Fairest One of All?

California has yet to decide, but we're well represented.* Rebeca Ventura, Miss Santa Cruz County 1996, will represent the county in the Miss California pageant in Fresno. The talented 17-year-old has participated with the Saint Francis Young Actors Guild in Watsonville since she first starred as Maria in the group's production of "West Side Story."

A New Home For Latino Art

La Galería de Casa Latina, housed on the lower level of the Merrill College Library at UC Santa Cruz, is nearing completion of its inaugural season. As the youngest of UCSC's on campus galleries, la Galería boasts the only gallery space in Santa Cruz County dedicated to showcasing art by and about Latinos and Latin Americans. Because the focus of la Galería is thematic and not ethnic, artists from all areas and backgrounds are invited to display their work, provided that they adhere to the Latin American and Chicano/Latino theme.

Artists are often frustrated by the formidable task of finding a place where they can display their work. Aspiring artists many times lack the resources and notoriety to secure a space in the gallery circuit. For this reason, the founding director of la Galería, Julianne Burton-Carvajal is trying to inform artists that space at la Galería is provided free of charge, and that a wide range of media—anything that can be framed and/or suspended from a wall—will be accepted.

In addition to providing space at no cost, la Galería offers emerging artists a unique opportunity to showcase their work in an environment frequented by students, intellectuals, and prominent community members. It also provides a much needed forum through which artists can explore and celebrate the diversity of Latin American cultures, which have so often been excluded from artistic spheres. In its inaugural season, la Galería has featured the work and collections of students and staff members from UCSC and Cabrillo College as well as community members.

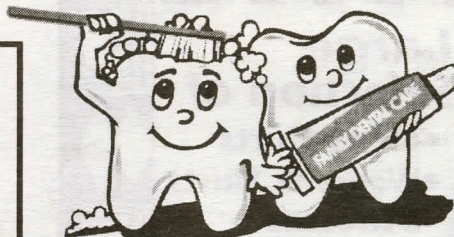
La Galería anticipates an exciting second season, with an anticipated photographic showcase in May from Nereo Lopez-Mesa, Columbia's leading photographer. Artists interested in displaying their work at la Galería can leave a message at 459-4284.

Currently on display at La Galería: Las caras de mi pueblo: visiones de Oaxaca. Photographs by Miguel Zafra. Runs until June 15.

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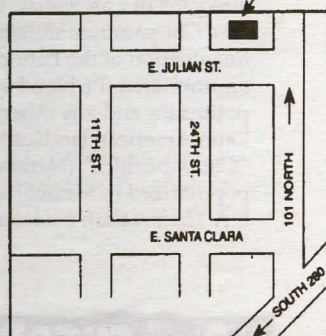


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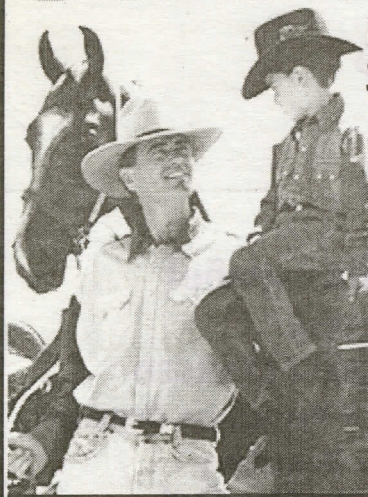
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Go Figure

Compiled by Jack Tilney and Claudia Meléndez

The Many Faces of the

Chupacabras

Dime que chupas y te diré quién eres

What animal is part grey alien, part porcupine, part kangaroo that thrives on sucking the blood of small household pets? Not Dole or Helms (But close). It's the Chupacabras (The Goatsucker), a mysterious livestock-killing creature that reportedly has been sighted in Puerto Rico, Florida and Mexico. While Carlos de Jesús, manager of a junkyard in Canóvanas, Puerto Rico, insists that "the Chupacabras situation is not a joke," the imagination of the Latino population has already appropriated the blood-sucking animals to mock politicians and any other sucker that roams the Latin American landscape. To the now famous "Chupapueblos" (Nationsucker or Peoplesucker, popularized in Mexico) and "Chupacabrón" (see L.A. Cucaracha), we would like to add our own:

Chupaniñas (Girlsucker): Kathie Lee Gifford

Chupahombres (Mansucker): Madonna

Chupamentes (Mindsucker): Television

Chupamadres (Mothersucker): Those who claim the U.S. Federal budget can be balanced by making welfare mothers and their children starve.



Some representations of Chupacabras from Mexico's *La Jornada*.

LA CUCARACHA



But he was only an Anglo

After 17 years on death row, Keith Daniel Williams was executed at San Quentin on May 2. Williams had been convicted of the murder of Miguel Vargas, Salvador Vargas and Lourdes Meza, three farmworkers from the Central Valley. After hearing his sentence, Williams allegedly exclaimed "But they were only Mexicans!" In some instances, as Williams was able to discover, Mexicans have access to the judicial system too.

Chicharrón is made of pigs

La Raza Coalition called for a boycott of Wal-Mart and Sam's Club after learning of their alleged contribution to the defense fund of the sheriff's deputies accused of beating two undocumented immigrants. According to an Associated Press report, Pig Skins Cops 4 Cops, an organization that helps survivors of slain officers, would be donating what has been donated by Sam's to the defense fund of Riverside County Deputy Sheriffs Tracy Watson and Kurtis Franklin. Stacey Webb, Wal-Mart spokesperson, denies the allegation, and so does Pig Skins.

We should all make them chicharrón.

¿No que no?

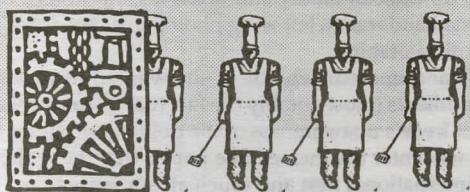
It will probably take a while, but the Sor Juana fad will eventually make everyone sick to their stomach. The latest in the Sor Juana love affair with intellectuals, artists and the like: Ofelia Medina, soap-opera star, militant Zapatista, and former hunchback (if you never saw the soap *Rina*, you'll never get it) is launching a "magnificent recording" entitled *Sor Juana Hoy*, based on the writings of our beloved nun. We told you so.



Decaf chiles?

Pace Foods, after a five-year exhaustive research project, has developed a no-heat jalapeño. Why would anyone bother with something so inane? Well, as Professor Sidney Mintz told the New York Times, "Americans [sic] do want to have these new experiences. They want to eat jalapeño peppers. But they don't want it to hurt." Millions of people in this American hemisphere have eaten full flavored jalapeños for thousands of years. But we understand. Some people are much too dainty to even consider eating food with flavor. So we at *El Andar* have come up with some tasty treats that people who hate flavor might like to try:

- **WONDERMALES:** Stuff a couple of slices of Wonder Bread with your favorite KFC treat and presto!
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- **PANCARRITOS:** Aunt Jemima never envisioned the possibilities of her pancake mix. Fill 'em up with spamasada, por supuesto!
- **NAFTACOS:** All of the above ingredients, prepared by an assembly line taquero, and you've got it.



The Real Naftacos

As if the McDonalds invasion of Latin America wasn't enough, now we've learned from Taco Shop poet Adolfo Guzmán that Taco Bell has planned to franchise in Mexico. Indignant, Mexican poets and intellectuals are calling for U.N. intervention to stop this blatant attack on Mexican cultural heritage. The only problem this group foresees would be the anger of Bosnian or Rwandan refugees when they learn that tons of Huitlacoche are more important than centuries of regional tensions. While the Mexicans sit and wait for Boutros Boutros Ghali to send in the heavy artillery, they can at least lobby their responsive senate to declare tacos Mexican patrimony. Both Pemex and Tacos would be safe from the destructive forces of transnational corporations. Yeah, right.

Bust the dangerous seamstress!

While Dole and his Republican cronies engage in a fierce battle against the "chupasytem" welfare women, a couple of Latinas were deprived of their means to earn a decent livelihood. Roque Ramírez decided to work out of her home after the company relocated, but the Labor Department began harrasing her last May, threatening to confiscate her sewing machine and giving her a ticket if she continues with her illegal activities. An old lady in the same apartment building lost the fruit that she sells to her neighbors to support herself. According to Gary Mack, building inspector with the city of Santa Ana, somebody complained that the old lady did not have a selling permit. They probably don't want her on welfare either.

LA CUCARACHA



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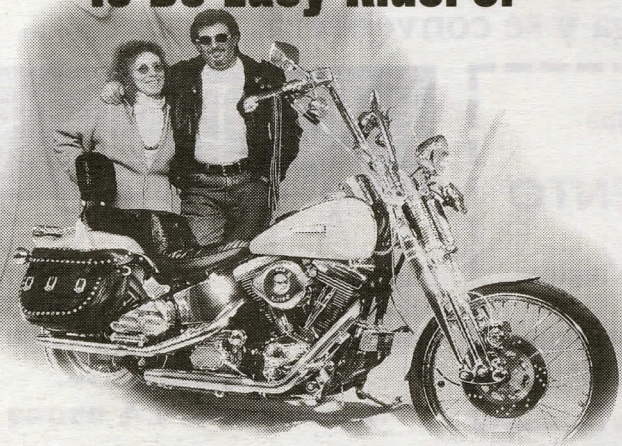
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Film and Video

Love in the Times of Dictatorship Isabel Allende Returns to the Big Screen

Of Love and Shadows

Director: Betty Kaplan

Katynka Zazueta Martínez

Following the controversy surrounding the movie version of *House of the Spirits*, director Betty Kaplan has taken on the challenge of presenting the second film adaptation of an Isabel Allende novel. *Of Love and Shadows* begins in 1978 during the Chilean dictatorship of General Pinochet. The protagonist, Irene Beltran (Jennifer Connelly), is the daughter of a well-to-do Chilean family and holds a glamorous job at a fashion magazine. While working with Francisco Leal (Antonio Banderas), a left wing photojournalist, Irene's eyes are opened to the atrocities occurring in the shadows of the dictatorship.

Kaplan read Allende's novel in 1986 and immediately knew she wanted to make a film adaptation. She realized that the novel had all the right ingredients (most notably the fact that it was, in essence, a love story) to be a commercial film. She also recognized that Irene's unawareness of the political situation of Chile is similar to the ignorance with which many movie-goers will enter the theater. She hoped that these elements would result in a production which could cross over as an international film and touch all audiences.

"The story stays on the main line of 'Is the couple going to really fall in love, and will they be able to stay together, and will they get out with their lives?'" says Kaplan. But she also points out that the film is not simply a love story. "We have lots of different levels in the movie because the movie talks about many different things. It talks about the price of finding the truth, the price of standing up for an ideal. And it talks about, in almost every scene, that you can't hide the truth because it will come out."

These attributes of the story kept Kaplan going during the seven years it took to get the film financed. Based on her experience, Kaplan says that films about truth, Latin America, and women are the hardest to finance. "I think there's very little interest of Latin America from the U.S. distributors and the film companies," says Kaplan. "I think the audience in fact is [interested]. I think the audience enjoys the humor and the stories and the sensuality of Latin America."



"Films about truth, Latin America, and women seem to be the hardest to finance." Betty Kaplan

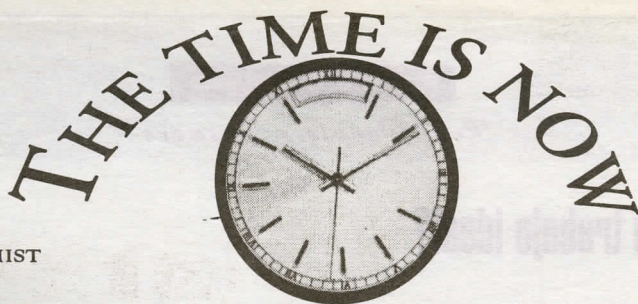
Of Love and Shadows opened last year in Latin America to excellent reviews and has since done well in Japan, Italy and Germany. However, critics in the U.S. claim that Jennifer Connelly was terribly miscast as Irene. The reviews bring to mind the controversy surrounding the film version of *House of the Spirits*. Although she found the adaptation of the screenplay very good in *House*, it took Kaplan a while to believe the characters. Thus she feels comparisons between the two films lack merit. "In *House of the Spirits* they were banking on these big names," says Kaplan. "Jennifer Connelly isn't a big name, she is perfectly cast as the Chilean girl, and if she's authentic for the Latin Americans why should she not be for the Americans?"

In an attempt to make the film as true to the novel as possible, Kaplan shared the original script with Allende and used her suggestions while working on the final script. She also visited the Chilean ministries and morgues before filming Irene's character taking the same voyage. In addition, the filmmakers did much research into torture practices by consulting a psychiatrist who treats torture victims.

This work wasn't easy. Kaplan knows many people who, like the characters of Irene and Francisco, were forced into political exile. And although Kaplan was born in New York City and raised in Venezuela, she lived in Argentina during the dictatorship and says she knows what it is like to live under a government similar to Pinochet's. Yet Kaplan says that when she sees an audience react to the film, she knows the time and energy put into its production was well worth it.

At the San Francisco screening for *Of Love and Shadows*, Isabel Allende told the audience, "If you haven't read my book don't do it. The film is better than the book." When I mention this praise to Kaplan, she laughs and says, "It makes me feel very honored but I must say that her book is such wonderful writing, please do not listen to her."

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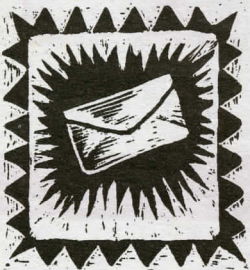


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el ataque al
corazón, el
cáncer del
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trabajo
tiene.

Y cómo le gustaba
trabajar con los jóvenes.
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What's your dream job? ¿Cuál sería su trabajo ideal?

Noel Calvillo

Asked at Watsonville Square

Linda Manríquez
Laundromat attendant

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Simón Chávez
Desempleado

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Socorro Gutiérrez
Cocinera

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Martha Hernández
Campesina

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Abel López
Unemployed (Norcal-Crossetti)

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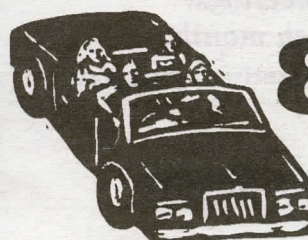
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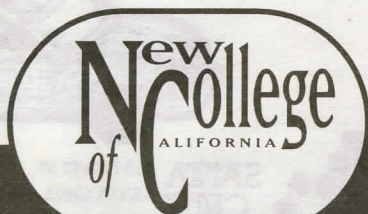
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The event will be held
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From 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.
At 202 Green Valley Rd.

Refreshments, food & music will be provided

Please come and join us in the celebration



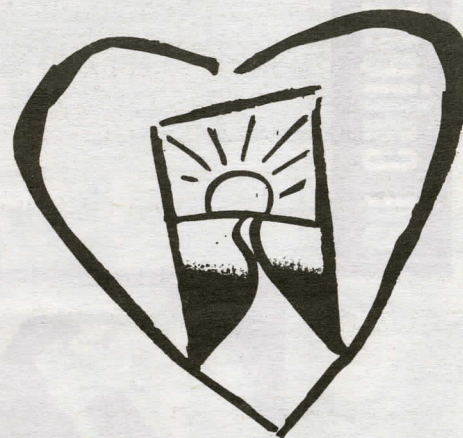
EL ANDAR

Gracias, mil gracias

Thanks to all our faithful followers who sent in their answers to the readers' survey. The editor will announce the winners of our raffle in the next couple of weeks, so sit tight by the phone. As we would like to hear from more readers, we will be running our survey in July, our anniversary issue. In the mean time, won't you write us a letter?

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They Rant! They Slam! They're Poets!

It may be a dog's life, but the new poetry is hissing back



Poetry and Jazz in San Francisco. Photo, Paul Myers

**"She rants! She raves! She crawls on the stage like
'The Sex Goddess of the Western Hemisphere'..."**

—Description of slam champ poet Maggie Estep



Nuyorican Poet Willie Perdomo.

by Julie Reynolds

For the poet, life has always been rough. Why should that be any different in hard times? But as television and video drive literary arts further from the public's interest, poets are ranting and slamming their way into national awareness. Poetry has survived by adapting, by making itself a means for us to comprehend and resist in a fearful era. The new 90s performance poetry is wild and nasty and fun. It has, as the *New York Observer* said about the Nuyorican Poets Cafe, "the vitality of vulgarity."

I knew that poetry had gotten bolder when, two years ago, my friend Claudia and I found ourselves under a spotlight, slathering red and black paint on poet Gerardo Navarro's body while he ripped off his clothes and shouted the crescendo

lines of his *Borders of the Mind* spoken word performance. I don't know if it was a profound moment in the literary universe, but we remember it with a smile.

Groups such as the Nuyorican Poets, who inhabit a cafe in New York's Lower East Side, earn attention with their aggressive street style. They don't just read poems, they scream them on stage, in videos and CDs. They host national poetry slams—kind of poetic "Gong Shows"—where poets try to outdo each other before they get ushered off the stage. Meanwhile, the transnational Taco Shop Poets have declared they are "taking over taco shops" from Tijuana to San Francisco. "We didn't like the usual space for poetry, coffee shops," says founder Adolfo Guzmán, "so we combined the spaces where

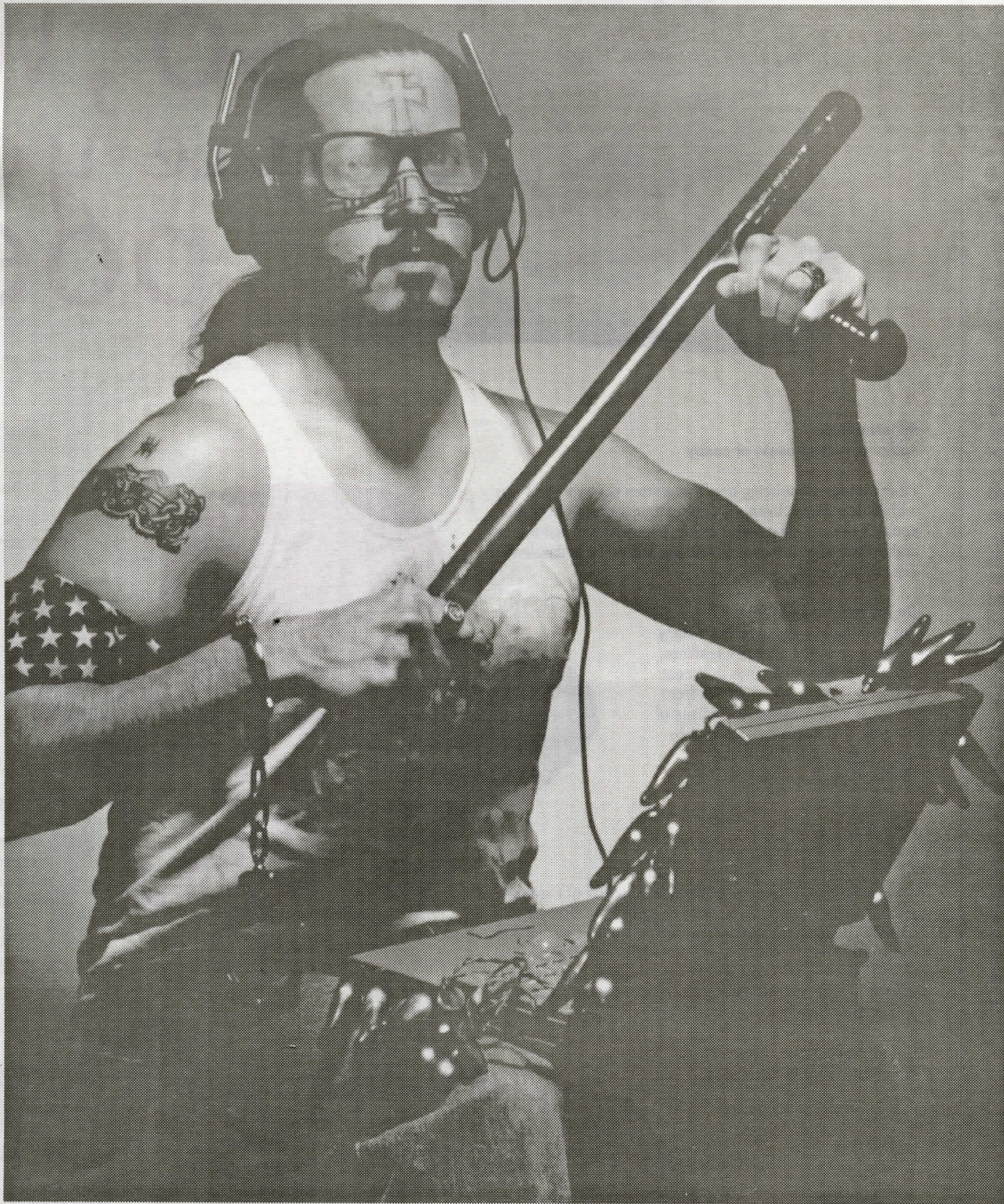
people go for a product, food, and the space where they go for another product, poetry. We advertised and the people came to places like Roberto's Taquería (in San Diego) to see us. So we started a traveling group of poets." Then there's intellectual sound byter Guillermo Gómez-Peña, who calls himself an "intercultural interpreter and reverse anthropologist." Nuyorican Maggie Estep, the "snarling tutu" and post-Madonna feminist who rants with a rock band, has been called the leader of the spoken word pack.

Across the US, the press hails the new performance poetry as "exuberantly alive," "immediate," and "unpretentious, articulate and tremendous fun." The media don't seem to care

Continued on 20

El Reventón de los Poetas

Es una vida de perro, pero la poesía está ganando espacios



Poeta-performero Roberto Sifuentes. Foto, ©1996 Eugenio Castro

Julie Reynolds

"¡Echa pestes! ¡Delira! Avanza en el escenario como la 'Diosa Sexual del Hemisferio Oeste'..." —Descripción acerca de Maggie Estep, campeona de slam poético

Para el poeta la vida siempre ha sido borrascosa. ¿Por qué habría de ser diferente en estos tiempos del carajo? Pero como la televisión y el video han alejado a las artes del interés del público, los poetas están despotricando y slammeando para conseguir el reconocimiento nacional. La poesía ha sobrevivido gracias a la adaptación, ahora lo hace por la elaboración de un significado ayude a comprender y resistir esta peligrosa era. La nueva poe-

sía-performance de los noventa es salvaje y sucia y divertida; tiene, como el *New York Observer* dice acerca de Café de Poetas Nuyoricans, "la vitalidad de la vulgaridad".

Sabía que la poesía se había vuelto más audaz cuando, hace dos años, mi amiga Claudia y yo nos encontramos bajo un reflector, embarrando pinturas roja y negra sobre el cuerpo del poeta Gerardo Navarro mientras él rasgaba sus ropas y gritaba en crescendo las líneas de su performance hablado *Borders of the Mind* (Fronteras de la mente). No sé si fue un momento sublime en el universo literario, pero nosotros lo recordamos con una sonrisa.

Grupos tales como los Poetas Nuyoricans, quienes habitan un café en la parte más baja del lado este de Nueva York, atraen la

atención con su agresivo estilo callejero. No sólo leen poemas, los gritan en el escenario, en videos y en cidis. Son los anfitriones de los slams de poesía —especie de concurso de poetas aficionados donde los jueces suenan la campana para descalificarlos— pero en este caso los poetas tratan de superar unos a otros antes de que los abucheen y los bajen del escenario. Mientras tanto los Poetas de las Taquerías de San Diego/Tijuana han declarado que "están tomando las taquerías" de Tijuana a San Francisco. "No nos gustaban los lugares comunes para escuchar poesía, los cafés", cuenta Adolfo Guzmán, "así que empezamos a leer poesía donde la gente asiste por otras razones, para comer por ejemplo. Comen-

Pase a 24

if the writing is any good or not; they're just enjoying the show. Bob Holman, a founder of the Nuyorican Poets, explained in a recent interview that the definition of poetry is "continually opening up... Rap is poetry. Cowboy poets are poets. American Sign Language is just as much a poem as a Nobel poem," Holman says. "The business of poetry, my dear, is busting frames."

Holman is director of the PBS documentary on spoken word performance, "Words in Your Face," as well as last spring's popular five-part public TV series, "The United States of Poetry."

"For poetry to survive," Holman told *Associated Press*, "it's got to kick itself into the next millennium—and television is the perfect medium for it."

"Written poetry is in crisis," claims Gómez-Peña. "People are not that excited about the written word. It no longer appeals to our perceptual challenges. So I do performance. Video, CD-ROMs, cable, the internet, 'zines—whatever it takes—that is the challenge."

This is not the first time in the modern era that poetry has hissed back at its stodgy reputation. In the 1950s, San Francisco poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti wrote, "The poetry which has been making itself heard here of late should be called street poetry... It amounts to getting poetry back into the street where it once was, out of the classroom, out of speech departments, and off the printed page."

California poet Adrienne Rich explains that poetry "has long been a way for communities to come together. In the 60s, poetry played a very important role. The African-American community used poetry and jazz a great deal, and in the 70s, the women's movement was bursting forth with poetry. This kind of thing [the performance movement] has been around before. But now the media is engaged. The younger generation of performance poets who have been influenced by MTV and TV can be very good in dealing with that media." Most likely the media is engaged because television can admire its own reflection and see it validated as art.

Cont. on 21

Taco Shop Poem

UN DIA VAS A PERDER LA CABEZA
Y NO TE VAS A DAR CUENTA
El masaje en mis manos
Se convierte en arte milenario.
El cuello de una dama fina
Para mí es pescuezo de gallina.
[crac]
Caen las perlas caniquientas
Hundiéndose muy dispuestas
En un mar rojo con fondo de vinil.
Después del gemido de satisfacción
Devuelvo la cabeza
Al son de "Muchas gracias".
Y "Me siento más completa".
Que más esperaban de manos
entrenadas
En Hollywooditlán.

Adolfo Guzmán



Adrienne Rich
Author of tons of books of poetry

I can't imagine *not* being one. I've written poetry since I was a child. It's always been a way of getting a grasp of life that I couldn't get any other way. For me, poetry is the ideal way to understand what it means to feel joy, suffer, be ambivalent: to exist in the world.

Do you make a living from it?

Not exactly. In a sense, with so many books in print, if I did more readings, I could live on my earnings as a poet. Certainly, nobody becomes rich from poetry. It's the least commoditized of the arts. That keeps us—in a healthy way—on the edge. It keeps us skeptical about society.

Victor Martínez
Author of *Caring for a House*

I was studying criminology, to be a detective, until I realized you had to be a cop first. So, in my first lit class, Robert Lowell had just died, and the teacher read one of his poems, and I said, "This is what I want." I asked myself "Which kind of literature has the most weight? If I'm going to do this, I want it to have weight." Being a poet is not about fame or money. It's about power.

Do you make a living from it?

I'm on the verge of doing so. I do odd jobs.

Well, let's just say "poet" did not make it to *Hispanic Magazine's* Top 100 Careers list. And if the stats about shorter life span and suicide are true, we had to ask, "Why do they do it?" Here are a number of better-known poets and their answers.

so, why are you a poet?



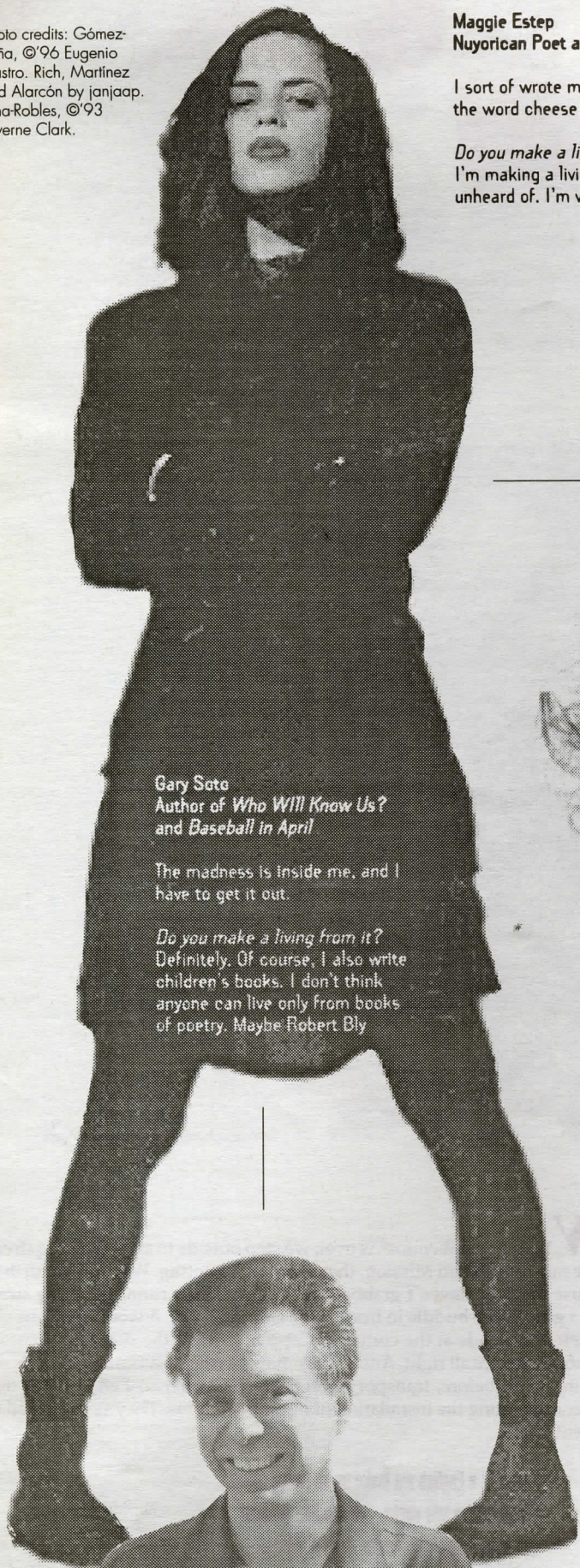
Guillermo Gómez-Peña
Performance artist, MacArthur "Genius"

— When I was a little kid my mother dropped a huge chile habanero in my milkshake. I turned purple, and since then, my life has never been the same. I was forced to become a poet. Also, I find poetry and performance have been expedient ways for outcasts to get their words out.

Do you make a living from it?
Yes.



Photo credits: Gómez-Peña, ©'96 Eugenio Castro. Rich, Martínez and Alarcón by janjaap. Luna-Robles, ©'93 Laverne Clark.



Gary Soto
Author of *Who Will Know Us?*
and *Baseball in April*

The madness is inside me, and I have to get it out.

Do you make a living from it?
Definitely. Of course, I also write children's books. I don't think anyone can live only from books of poetry. Maybe Robert Bly

Maggie Estep
Nuyorican Poet and spoken word artist

I sort of wrote my first poem so that I could use the word cheese a lot.

Do you make a living from it?
I'm making a living doing something that's almost unheard of. I'm very lucky it got trendy. (AP)

Francisco X. Alarcón
Author of *Snake Poems* and *De Amor Oscuro*

What a question! If I want to get melodramatic—and I do— I'll say that poets are condemned to be poets. You're making public something intimate. You either have to be courageous or condemned to do it.

Do you make a living from it?
No. I wish I could. Well, I teach poetry, but I don't make a living writing poems. Though I live through poetry.

Margarita Luna Robles
Author of upcoming *Things I Didn't Know I Loved & Things I Don't Want to Talk About*

It allows me the freedom to do and say anything I want. In no other aspect of my life am I so free. In poetry, I call it as I see it, and in daily life, people aren't that way.

Do you make a living from it?
I wish I could say I did. I'm trying hard.

Adolfo Guzmán
Taco Shop Poets Founder

Because I don't want to live that long?... Really, the kind of poetry that I do allows me to create a space where I'm comfortable. Otherwise, where do I belong? Me being a Chicano. Me being young at the end of the century. Me being a witness to all the violence against people with the same heritage as me.

Do you make a living from it?
No. Not at all.

Not everyone wants to get their words off the printed page. Poets like Rich who want their work read are still with us. "When I got into it," says San Francisco poet Victor Martínez, "it wasn't through performance, it was from reading, even poets who are dead. I never improvise, but I do like to get up and read. Some poets really like the performing. Juan Felipe [Herrera] is a master. Victor Hernández Cruz has the heavyweight title."

"When people read from pieces of paper, we tend to call them poets," says performer John S. Hall. "When some people memorize their stuff, we call them performance artists." (Hall's band, King Missile, is known for their hit spoken word recording, *Detachable Penis*.)

Because of their rap and punk origins, and an immediacy that writer Thomas Swiss sees in the "poetics of presence," the performance poets have a forcefulness and urgency that the printed page rarely conveys. The performers often use angry, violent imagery: Bob Holman talks about the "fist of poetry." "Words burning crisp with anger," reads the self-promotion for New York's Reg E. Gaines. Gómez-Peña is the "warrior for Gringostroika," Maggie Estep "throws it back in your face," and the Taco Shop Poets are "cultural guerrillas." The very nature of the poetry slam, where poets have to be fast and clever or face the taunts of the audience, has a gladiator end-of-the-millennium harshness. "To me, slams are grueling and frightening," says Martínez. A lot like life in the 90s, and a lot like the new poetry itself.

Even when their poems speak of forceful ideas, due to their method of delivery the paper poets will always appear quieter and gentler. This is not to say that poets who write are out of style. They're making a strong comeback, and plain old poetry readings are on the increase: a recent San Francisco *Bay Guardian* listed several dozen readings and open mic poetry events during one week. "This is an incredibly rich time for poetry in the US," says Adrienne Rich. "We are hearing so many rich, diverse voices. Anyone who cares about poetry should be elated." Maybe the revival of live poetry has come about because some people long to hear someone say something, out loud, with words; something that doesn't hide behind the jerky obscure video images of MTV and all its offspring. Of course, to others like Holman and Gómez-Peña, those video images often are the poetry.

We're at a reading in San Francisco, part of a series called "Los Bohemios" at Café La Bohème, the soul of the Mission district. There's one of everything, or everybody, here: old grey poets, stylish young poets, and dried-up leftist kind of poets. There are a lot of black berets in this room.

Nobody in the place ever shuts up. There is a clanking of wine glasses and coffee cups and conversation that never ceases, even as the featured poet, Neeli Cherkovsky, reads from his new book, *Animal*. And he's good. The ambient sound



FEVER

I was educated by pain, as we all are, I suppose, a bellicose illness and pore penetrating fever bullied me to silence. On a bed, huge as a life raft, floating fire visited me with dreams of sweats and spongings.

For two weeks, bloated and engorged with delirium, I lay curled on a bed, a cold pillow dashed between my legs, one moment shuddering with the slow pull of being born, another moment dying with a gnawing and tearing of little teeth. And when, finally, I awakened, I found that I had travelled away from age and height, and nearer to texture and understanding.

I discovered again the miracle of balancing a direction for my legs, and knew that life wasn't just a pause between commas, a throat clearing phlegm, but arms that when lifted in fever echo back to their arched beginning.

After a time, weightless and wandering, a man arrives whole again, like a boy beside a river, plucking off his shoes, and soaking the bread of his lungs in the dense night of a redwood forest, kneeling to drink from the river of distances.

© Victor Martínez

LOSING IT ON STAGE

.....I suddenly forget the script.
(I begin to improvise)
de-de-dear audience:
do you know where are we meant to go tonight?
(long pause. I scream for the house lights)
is there a hot concierto somewhere in this unbearable city?
(no one answers)
where will I be at the end of this text?
(two people stand up and leave)
will I be deaf, mad or somewhat incomplete?
(five more people leave)
will my oldest house still be standing?
will my adored mother ever return from Thailand?
(people continue to walk out)
will my friends be dying of AIDS or random bullets?
on whose breasts will I be resting next century?
on whose land will I be resting for good?
is it true that the very day I finish this text
my heart will suddenly cease to pound?
(total silence)
answer me!
fuckin' answer me!!
(the theater is empty by now; I am screaming at the top of my lungs)
I'm a religious creature after all
I demand theological answers de ya!
(I adopt a fetal position on the ground & begin to sob like a baby.)
pronto
cambio di locazione:
I wake up in a pink Holiday Inn hotel room
who knows where chingados
the telephone is ringing
"Mr. Gómez, the people next door have complained
that you or someone else in your room or inside of you
is screaming obscenities in a foreign language..."

I hang up. I'm out of ink & cigarettes.

Guillermo Gomez-Peña
© 1996

Excerpt from *The Last Migration*
The New World Border: Prophecies, Poems and Loqueras for the End of the Century, City Lights Books, avail. July

becomes a murmur beneath the poetry that makes it friendly: it's okay to be human in the presence of this art—drink, walk around, say hi to your friends.

Besides poets, there's Tony Santiago, sax player. Tony tells the audience that he's "happy to see the Bohemian intelligencia" and someone in the crowd yells out, "Three generations!"

During a break, Tony tells me that he used to be a jazz musician, and he's out of work. He's "forced to play with poets. Someday the poets will catch on, some day," he complains. "They don't even give me bus fare." As Tony says this, someone offers to buy him a burrito. "Hey, I'm gettin' paid! Honey, this conversation is over!" he says, as he tears down the street.

Guitarist Ignacio Reyes plays and Lupe Román sings, along with a guy in the audience who drums. There is an altar for San Francisco sculptor/poet Manuel Martín, who died just days before. The whole evening is dedicated to him. The poet Carlos "Rumberos" Ramírez sings kids' songs in Spanish that have everybody cracking up.

Max Schwarz does a fast improv rap. It's about himself, a white guy, and a black poet friend, Bill Strond, asking the Newark, New Jersey Police for directions one night in the "wrong" part of town:

"Never ask a police officer for directions

especially if you're not like them

and we're not like them

what are you doing here? they ask

we say we're poets

and one of them says, well, then, where are you published?

a cop asking me where I'm published!

you have to feed the truth to them like food to a baby."

Max doesn't stop to breathe, it seems.

**After going all over the place about
politics, life, and "lesbians and thespians,"
he gets back to the cops:**

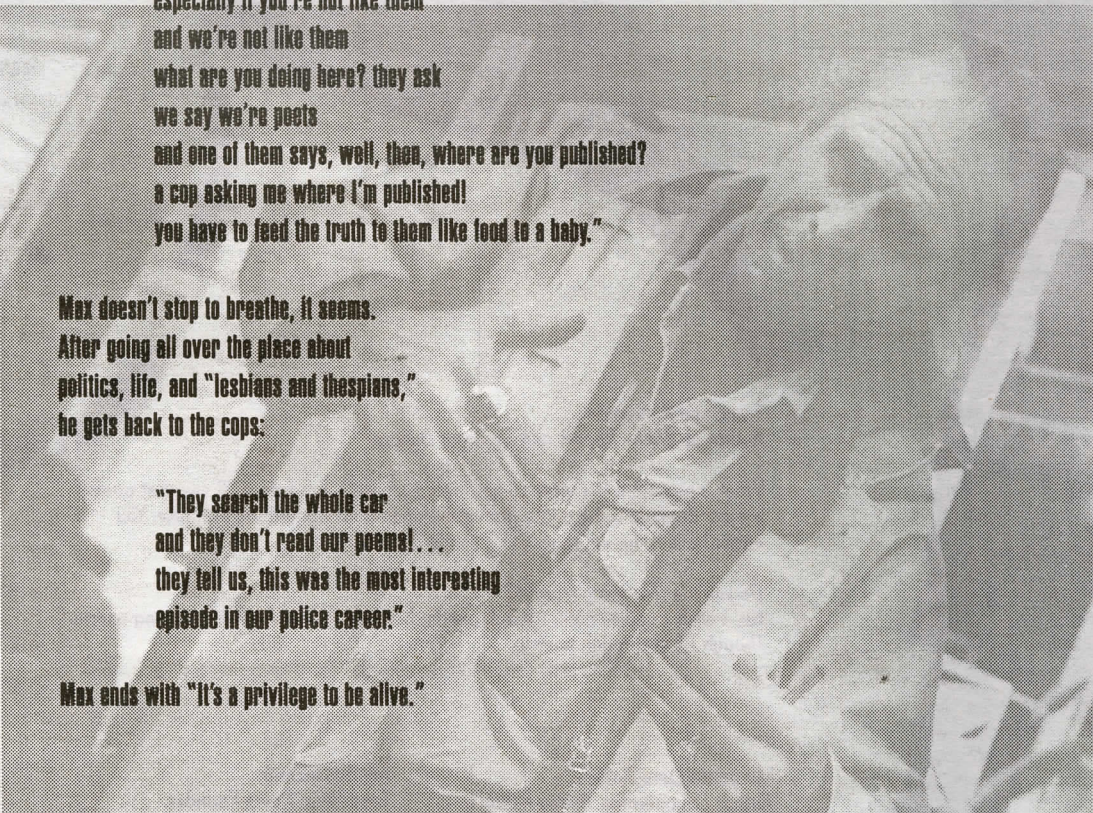
"They search the whole car

and they don't read our poems!...

they tell us, this was the most interesting

episode in our police career."

Max ends with "It's a privilege to be alive."



Max Schwarz. Photo, Paul Myers

There are, even with all the noise, moments in the evening when gusts of emotion blow through the crowd; for example, when Jorge Argueta passionately reads Martín's last poem. You hear it and feel it: Manuel Martín was loved.

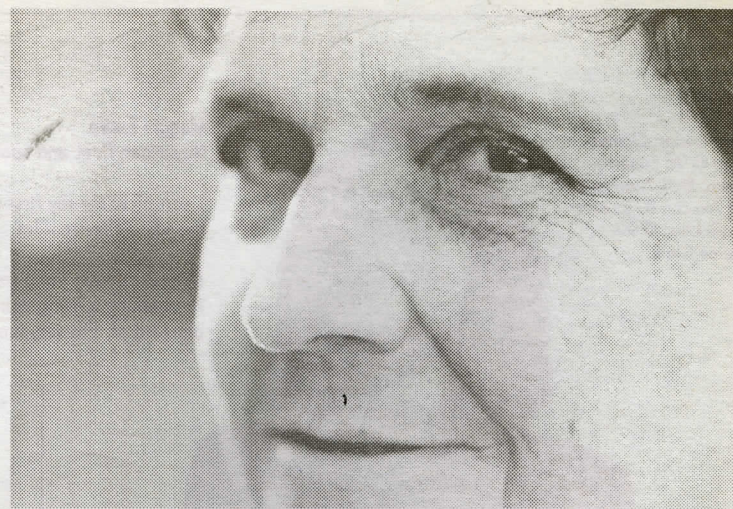
Yet some people grumble when it's over. "Motherf—!" complains one who didn't get to read. A woman excuses herself, saying, "I guess poetry's just not my thing."

Argueta, the poet who organized the series, tells me that he was once in the Midwest and was surprised to find one of his own books in a used bookstore—for 25¢. "I didn't know whether to laugh or cry," Jorge says. "I bought it and I gave it to someone who would read it." "Why do poets do it? People really don't care about poetry," says journalist Beatriz Johnston-Hernández, who is married to Jorge.

There are statistics that show that writers have "significantly" shorter lives than other artists, and that they are more likely to commit suicide than other people. In a *New York Times* article from November 14, 1994, Johns Hopkins professor Kay Jamison claims that that writers are "10 to 20 times as likely as other people to suffer manic-depressive or depressive illnesses, which lead to suicide more than any other mental disorders do."

In the *Journal of Economic Psychology*, (Economic Psychology? Now that's poetry!), a report by David E. Kaun shows that the average writer lives to age 63.9, while other kinds of artists such as painters, dancers and musicians all live to at least age 69.1, (with a high of 72.6 for photographers). "In seeking an explanation for these vivid results," concludes Kaun, "I have argued that the peculiar nature of the writer's work provides little, if any, short term satisfaction, and to the contrary, some fair amount of pain."

"Awaiting the knife of truth," is how poet Ed Morales describes the life.



Adrienne Rich. Photo, janjaap

When "Los Bohemios" is over, we step outside to six screaming sirens in the rain at 24th and Mission: there's been a shooting. We can't go further, because the cops haven't grabbed the guy yet. He's running up the street with a gun. So we huddle in front of the cafe and wait. A woman tells us she just left her friends at the corner of Capp St., where the shooting occurred. She hopes they're all right. Another woman, María Rosa Galdamez, tells me that the week before, transportation Secretary Federico Peña was at that corner celebrating the installation of new street lights. They're supposed to prevent crime.

**rappin' / a English we make up as we go along
turnin' nouns into verbs / braids into crowns
and always fetchin' dreams from a horizon
strewn with bones and flesh of those of us
who didn't make it / whose smiles and deep
dark eyes / help us to continue to see
there's so much life here.**

—ntozake shange

Thank God poetry is kicking and screaming its way into our awareness. It makes this decade bearable. It reminds us: this corner, this night, this rain, these friends, our lives, have meaning.

And it's a privilege to be alive.

Excerpt from *PEOPLE OF WATTS* by ntozake shange, from *Aloud! Voices from the Nuyorican Poets Cafe*, published by Henry Holt

Poetry Cafes, Dives, Web Sites, and Taco Shops

Readings & Slams

Ongoing and Occasional

Weekly Poetry Slam
Wednesdays 8 pm
Intersection for the Arts/Four Walls Gallery
3160 A 16th St
San Francisco

3rd Friday of every month
Los Bohemios
Cafe La Boheme 8 pm
3318 24th St. (near Mission)
San Francisco
Featured readers followed by open readings,
organized by Jorge Argueta. Free.

Open Mic, Spoken Word and Music
Artist's Cafe
208 Valencia
San Francisco
Call for dates & times: 415 864-5402

Poetry Readings and Open Mic
Chacho's Restaurant
18 S. Almaden
San Jose

Organizer Jorge Sánchez, who brought the Taco Shop Poets here last year, is planning to bring the San Diego/TJ group back to Sanjo; and some new readings throughout the year, such as Latino erotica. Check Chacho's for updates; no times & dates yet. Info: Jorge Sánchez, 408 293-1387.

June 8 7:30 pm
Weaving Words
MACLA/San José Center for Latino Arts
510 S. First St
San Jose
devorah major, Margarita Luna-Robles and the participants in MACLA's Erasing the Margins women's writing workshop. Admission \$5. For a major poetry experience, start here and then follow the crowd up to catch the second half of Flor y Canto in SF (see next listing).

June 8 8 pm
Flor y Canto
Benefit for Yolanda López
Mission Cultural Center
2868 Mission St.
San Francisco
Poets Francisco Alarcón, José Antonio Burciaga, Lorna Dee Cervantes, Juan Felipe Herrera, Victor Martínez, José Montoya, Cherrié Moraga, Alejandro Murguía, Margarita Luna Robles, and Elba Sánchez! AND music by Fr. Loco's Conjunto Jalapeño, Jaqueline Rago and the Jappenin' Jarochos. The event benefits painter Yolanda López, who suffered a ruptured blood vessel in the brain last month and is now recuperating. Tickets \$15, \$10 kids/seniors at Galería de la Raza, La Peña, and Mission Cultural Center

June 30
Dragon's Breath Poetry Slam
Front St Pub
516 Front St Santa Cruz
Open competition—poets perform their own works for randomly chosen judges from the audience. Audience participation is encouraged. Registration 6:30 Info 335-3991

Futures
The Nuyorican Poets Cafe
Sept 26-28
Shepherdstown Center, WV
Nov 20-23
Arizona State University
Tempe, AZ



Workshops/ Lectures/Book Signings

June 18, 19, 20
Guillermo Gómez-Peña
Writer in Residence
Intersection for the Arts
446 Valencia
San Francisco CA
415 626-ARTS

June 18 7-10 pm
Multimedia Writing Workshop
For writers and text-based performance artists dealing with interdisciplinary literature (for video, radio and live performance), activist literature and the politics of Spanglish. \$25 fee. Registration limited, advance payment required.

June 19
Performative Lecture
With spoken word, slides, video and a discussion with the audience. A reception follows. \$7/\$5

June 22 1 pm
Conversation with Gómez-Peña
Interviewing Himself
Co-sponsored by SFMOMA
Phyllis Wattis Theater
151 Third St. San Francisco
Tickets \$8/\$4.

June 26 7:30 pm
City Lights Bookstore
261 Columbus Avenue
San Francisco
Author event for the release of *The New World Border: Prophecies, Poems and Loqueras for the End of the Century*, a collection of essays by Guillermo Gómez-Peña. Free. Info: 415 362-8193

July 12-19
Art of the Wild
Writing With the Natural World
Squaw Valley, CA
A workshop with Francisco X. Alarcón and others, presented by the Squaw Valley Community of Artists and UC Davis Dept. of English 916 752-1658

New Books

You read it here first, folks (maybe). Guillermo Gómez-Peña's new collection of all that stuff he does, *The New World Border: Prophecies, Poems and Loqueras for the End of the Century*, will be released by City Lights Books in June. Victor Martínez has a novel coming out with Harper Collins, *Parrot In the Oven*. Gary Soto's new book *Junior College* (Chronicle Books) is due in the spring of '97. Francisco X. Alarcón's first kids' book, *Laughing Tomatoes and Other Spring Poems*, will be published in a bilingual version by Children's Book Press.



Web Things

Taco Shop Poets
http://multiple.insertions.com/mi_html/contrib/writing/iv08.htm
E-mail: chintolas@aol.com
The Nuyorican Poets Cafe
Aloud! Voices from the Nuyorican Poets Cafe is at <http://www.obs-us.com/obs/english/books/holt/books/aloud/index.htm>
Roberto Sifuentes, Guillermo Gómez-Peña
Una locura, complete with a cyberconfessional.
<http://chico.rice.edu/CyberVato>

Money for Poets
Poets and photographers from Santa Clara county are invited to apply for a \$2000 fellowship. Application deadline July 24, 1996. Info: LoAn Do 408 998-2787.

PHOTO
Guillermo Gómez-Peña
and friends perform some
Dangerous Border Games.
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1:30pm- 5:00pm

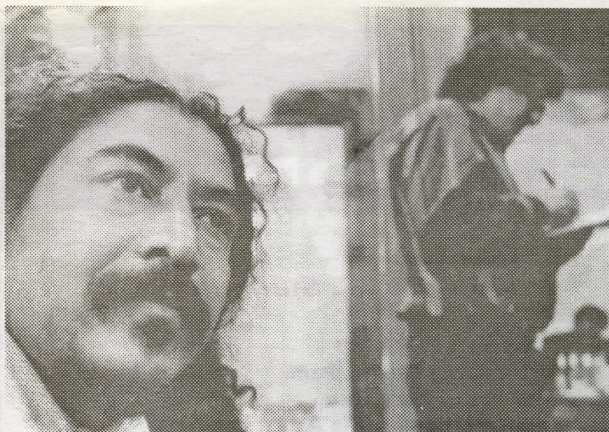
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the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Santa Clara Valley at 467-9890

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Poetas Jorge Argueta y Neeli Cherkovsky. Foto Paul Myers

Taco Shop Poem

Alta luna en la noche de Tijuana,
oronda, gorda, descarada.
Presumida ciudad:
si la miras que baja para buscar mi esquina,
si acurruca leve bajo el alero de mi casa,
si desciende hasta el mar,
si se mete en mi cama y mete el pie en el agua,
ciudad, no te acongojes,
no quieras deslumbrarla,
no me quieras quitar esta cuchilla que abre la noche
en dos,
que se desangra oronda, gorda, descarada,
alta luna en la noche de Tijuana.

Alfonso García Cortez

(de: "Elegías Postergadas". Editorial La Tinta del Alcatraz, Toluca, México, 1994)

viene de 19

zamos a anunciar las lecturas de poesía y la gente asistía, lugares como Roberto's Taquería (en San Diego) a donde la gente nos iba a ver. Así es como fundamos un grupo de poetas errantes". Guillermo Gómez Peña, intelectual, *sound byter*, se llama a sí mismo un "intérprete intercultural y antropólogo inverso". Y la nuyorican Maggie Estep, "la faldita gruñiente de ballet", feminista post-Madonna que declama a toda voz con una banda de rock, ha sido llamada la líder de la manada de la palabra hablada.

A lo largo de Estados Unidos, la prensa ha descrito a la nueva poesía-performance como "exuberantemente viva", "inmediata" y "sin pretensiones, articulada y tremendamente divertida". No parece que a los medios les preocupe si la redacción es buena o no; sólo disfrutaban el show. Bob Holman, uno de los fundadores de los Poetas Nuyoricans, en una entrevista reciente explicó que la definición de poesía está "expandiéndose continuamente... Rap es poesía. Los poetas vaqueros son poetas. El Lenguaje Norteamericano de Signos para Sordomudos es tan poema como un poema Nobel", dice Holman. "El negocio de la poesía, querida, es romper las etiquetas."

Holman es director del documental del Servicio Público de Transmisión PBS, por sus siglas en inglés, sobre el performance de la palabra hablada, "Words in Your Face" (Palabras en tu cara), así como de la popular serie televisiva "The United States of Poetry" (Los Estados Unidos de la Poesía), que constó de cinco capítulos y fue transmitida la primavera pasada.

"Para que la poesía sobreviva" Holman dijo a Associated Press "debe entrarle al próximo milenio — y la televisión es el medio perfecto para ello."

"La poesía escrita está en crisis" reclama Gómez Peña. "La gente no está tan interesada en la palabra escrita. Ya no atrae a nuestros desafíos perceptuales. Por eso hago performances. El video, los CD-ROM, el cable, el internet, las revistas independientes —lo que sea necesario— ése es el desafío."

No es la primera vez en la era moderna que la poesía ha autocrítico su indigesta reputación. En los años cincuenta Lawrence Ferlinghetti, poeta originario de San Francisco, escribió "La poesía que últimamente se hace oír por estos rumbos debería ser llamada poesía callejera... Equivale a regresar a la poesía a la calle donde alguna vez estuvo, fuera del salón de clases, fuera de los departamentos de declamación, fuera de la página impresa."

La poeta californiana Adrienne Rich explica que la poesía "ha sido por mucho tiempo una manera de que las comunidades se unan. En los años sesenta, la poesía jugó un papel muy importante: la comunidad afro-norteamericana utilizó en abundancia la poesía y el jazz, y en los años setenta el movimiento feminista estuvo repleto de poesía. Este tipo de manifestación (el movimiento del performance) ha existido anteriormente, pero ahora los medios de comunicación están cautivados. La generación más joven de poetas del performance, quienes han sido influenciados por MTV y la televisión, pueden tener buenas relaciones con los medios." Es probable que los medios de comunicación estén atrapados por su propia imagen, porque la televisión puede admirar su propio reflejo, validado como arte, en los jóvenes videopoetas *high-tech*.

Pero como Rich no todos quieren que las palabras desaparezcan de la hoja impresa. Todavía existen poetas que quieren que su trabajo sea leído. "Cuando empecé con esto" dice el poeta sanfranciscano Víctor Martínez, "no existía el performance, se hacía a través de la lectura, incluso de poetas que están muertos. Nunca improviso, pero me gusta levantarme y leer. A algunos poetas les gusta mucho hacer performances. Juan Felipe (Herrera) es un maestro. Víctor Hernández Cruz tiene el título de peso completo".

"Cuando la gente lee de las hojas de papel, tendemos a llamarlos poetas" dice el performer John S. Hall. "Cuando memorizan sus textos, los llamamos performers". (La banda de Hall, King Missile, es conocida por el éxito de su grabación de palabra hablada *Detachable Penis* —El pene desmontable—).

Debido a sus orígenes en el rap y el punk, y una inmediatez que el escritor Thomas Swiss ve en "la poética de la presencia", los poetas del performance tienen la contundencia y la urgencia que la página impresa raramente comunica. Los performers con frecuencia utilizan la imaginería del enojo, de la violencia: Bob Holman habla acerca del "puño de la poesía". "Las palabras se queman junto con el enojo" se lee en la autopromoción de Reg E. Graines en Nueva York. Gómez Peña es el "guerrero de la Gringostroika", Maggie Estep "te lo echa a la cara" y los Poetas de las Taquerías son "guerrillas culturales". La verdadera naturaleza del *slam* poético, donde los poetas tienen que ser rápidos y brillantes o tienen que encantar las burlas de la audiencia, tiene una dureza de gladiador de final de milenio. "En mi opinión los *slams* son agotadores y provocan espanto", dice Martínez. Muy parecidos a la vida de los noventa y muy parecidos a la poesía en sí misma.

Aún cuando sus poemas hablan de ideas fuertes, debido a su método de entrega, los poetas de papel siempre aparecerán más tranquilos y gentiles. Esto no quiere decir que los poetas que escriben están pasados de moda. Están regresando con paso firme y las lecturas de poesía a secas, como las de antes, se están incrementando: una edición reciente del *Bay Guardian* de San Francisco listó varias docenas de lecturas y eventos abiertos de poesía durante una semana. "Este es un momento increíblemente fértil para la poesía en los Estados Unidos", dice Adrienne Rich. "Tenemos muchas voces sustanciosas y diversas. Deberían estar eufóricos todos aquellos a quienes les importa la poesía". Quizás el despertar de la poesía viva ha ocurrido porque algunos ansían oír a alguien decir algo, en voz alta, con palabras; algo que no se oculte detrás de las oscuras y espasmódicas imágenes de video de MTV y toda su descendencia. Por

supuesto, para otros como Holman y Gómez Peña, estas imágenes seguidas son poesía.

Estamos en una lectura en San Francisco, la cual forma parte de la serie llamada "Los Bohemios" en el café La Boheme, el alma del distrito de la Misión. Aquí hay un poco de todo: poetas envejecidos, jóvenes poetas estilizados, poetas del tipo izquierdoso que parecían extintos. Se ven muchas boinas negras en este lugar.

Aquí nunca nadie se calla. Se oyen cómo chocan las copas de vino y las tazas de café y la conversación nunca cesa, incluso cuando el poeta que acaba de ser presentado, Neeli Cherkovsky, lee extractos su nuevo libro *Animal*. Es un buen poeta. El sonido ambiental se hace amigable: se convierte en un murmullo debajo de la poesía, está bien ser humano en presencia de este arte, beber, andar por ahí, saludar a los amigos.

Además de los poetas está Tony Santiago, un saxofonista. Tony dice a la audiencia que "está contento de ver la *intelligentsia* bohemia" y alguien del público grita "¡Tres generaciones!"

Durante un descanso, Tony me dice que fue músico de jazz y que está sin chamba. "Estoy obligado a tocar con poetas, los poetas algún día se harán populares" se queja, "ni siquiera me dan para el camión." Al decir esto Tony alguien se ofrece a comprarle un burrito. "¡Me están pagando! ¡Querida, se acabó esta conversación!" dice mientras se precipita hacia la calle.

El guitarrista Ignacio Reyes toca y Lupe Román canta, junto con uno de la audiencia que el tambor. Hay un altar para el escultor/poeta sanfranciscano Manuel Martín, quien murió hace pocos días. Toda la velada está dedicada a él. El poeta Carlos "Rumberos" Ramírez canta canciones para niños en español y hace que todos se mueran de risa.

Max Scharwz realiza una rápida improvisación de rap. Es acerca de sí mismo, un blanco, y su amigo el poeta negro Bill Strond, quienes están en la parte "peligrosa" de Newark, Nueva Jersey y piden a la policía que les indique cómo llegar a cierto lugar:

**"Nunca le pidas a
un policía que te ayude
en especial
si no eres como ellos
y no somos como ellos
¿qué están haciendo aquí?
ellos preguntan
somos poetas decimos
y uno de ellos dice, bueno, a ver
¿dónde están publicados?
¡un tira preguntándome dónde
estoy publicado!
tienes que alimentarlos con la
verdad como a un bebé
se le da comida."**

**Parece que Max no deja de
respirar. Después de ir por todos
lados hablando de política, vida
y "lesbianas y poetas"
regresa al tema de la tira:**

**"¡Revisan todo el coche y no leen
nuestros poemas!...
nos dicen, éste fue el episodio más
interesante en nuestra
carrera policiaca."**

**Max termina con "Estar vivo es
un privilegio".**

Junto con todo el ruido, hay momentos de la noche cuando ráfagas de emoción flotan sobre el público; por ejemplo, cuando Jorge Argueta lee apasionadamente el último poema de Martín. Lo oyen y lo sienten: Manuel Martín fue amado.

Algunas personas refunfuñan cuando la velada se termina. "¡Chingada madre!" reclama una mujer que no alcanzó a leer, después se disculpa diciendo "Creo que la poesía no es lo mío".

Argueta, el poeta que organizó las series, me dijo que una vez estaba en el medio oeste y se sorprendió al encontrar uno de sus propios libros en una librería de viejo — por 25¢. "No sabía si reír o llorar", dice Jorge. "Compré el libro y se lo di a alguien que sabía que lo leería." "¿Por qué los poetas se dedican a esto? En realidad a la gente no le importa la poesía", dice la periodista Beatriz Johntson-Hernández, quien está casada con Jorge.

Hay estadísticas que muestran la tendencia "significativa" de los escritores a tener vidas más cortas, comparados con otros artistas, y que tienen mayor probabilidad de cometer suicidio que otras personas. En un artículo del *New York Times* del 14 de noviembre de 1994, Kay Jamison, profesor en Johns Hopkins, reclama que los escritores tienen "10 o 20 veces más probabilidades que otras personas a sufrir maniaco-depresión o enfermedades depresivas, lo cual conduce más al suicidio que cualquier otro desorden mental."

En el *Periódico de Psicología Económica* (¿Psicología Económica? eso sí que es poesía) un informe de David E. Kaun muestra que el promedio de vida de los escritores es de 63.9 años, mientras otros tipos de artistas, tales como pintores, bailarines y músicos viven 69.1 años como mínimo (con un índice de 72.6 para fotógrafos). "En la búsqueda de una explicación para estos resultados vívidos" concluye Kaun "Arguyo que la naturaleza peculiar del trabajo del escritor proporciona poca, si es que alguna, satisfacción a corto plazo y por el contrario, está acompañada de una buena cantidad de dolor."

"Esperando el cuchillo de la verdad", es como el poeta Ed Morales describe la vida.

Cuando "Los Bohemios" se termina, salimos y se escucha el aullido de seis sirenas bajo la lluvia en la intersección de la calle 24 y Mission: ha ocurrido una balacera. No podemos ir más allá, porque todavía no han agarrado al tipo que disparó. Este corre en la calle con una pistola. Nos amontonamos en frente del café y esperamos. Una mujer nos dice que acaba de dejar a sus amigas en la esquina de la calle Capp, donde ocurrió la balacera. Espera que estén bien. Una mujer parada a mi lado, Rosa María Galdamez, me dice que una semana antes, el secretario de Transporte, Federico Peña, estaba en esa esquina celebrando la instalación de nuevos postes de luz. Supuestamente son para prevenir el crimen.

**rapeando / un inglés que se hace al andar
transformando cosas en verbos / trenzas en coronas
y arrastrando siempre sueños del horizonte
esparcidos con huesos y carne de aquellos de nosotros
que no la hicieron / cuyas sonrisas y profundos
ojos oscuros / nos ayudan a seguir viendo
hay tanta vida aquí.**

—ntozake shange

Gracias a Dios la poesía está de regreso y gritando para que la reconozcamos. Hace esta década soportable. Nos recuerda: esta esquina, esta noche, esta lluvia, estos amigos, nuestras vidas, tienen significado.

Es un privilegio estar vivo.

Traducción: Consuelo Alba y John Speyer

Extracto de PEOPLE OF WATTS (Gente de Watts) de ntozake shange, tomado de *Aloud! Voices from the Nuyorican Poets Cafe*, Henry Holt.



En el Café La Boheme Foto, Paul Myers

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2. Siga la regla 1/3 —Corte su pasto con frecuencia, de esta manera no más que 1/3 de longitud del pasto se corta en cualquier ocasión.
3. Si es tiempo de comprar una cortadora nueva, considere la adquisición de una cortadora de mantillo. Las cortadoras de mantillo tienen una acción de cuchilla adicional, la cual corta el pasto en piezas más pequeñas y las impulsa hacia el suelo.

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Luiz Rodrigues Foto janjaap

Robin Atwood

Inspirada por la Conferencia Ecológica "Cumbre de la Tierra" celebrada en Río de Janeiro en 1992, en Santa Cruz una red de personas comprometidas trabajan para establecer los estándares de la Conferencia, a través de la organización de *Ecoequipos*, e influenciar el plan general del condado.

Los conceptos y las prácticas de la sustentabilidad están ganando terreno. Los ecoequipos (grupos pequeños de amigos, compañeros de trabajo, familiares o vecinos) trabajan a partir de los lineamientos expertos aprendidos en seis reuniones, las cuales se llevan a cabo mensualmente, en donde aprenden a reducir basura, eliminar el desperdicio de agua, mejorar la eficiencia de la energía doméstica, mejorar el uso del transporte y más.

Jeanne Nordland, residente del condado de Santa Cruz, asistió a la conferencia de Río y trajo los "Estándares de Desarrollo Comunitario Sustentable" y la "Campaña de Estilo de Vida Sustentable" para ponerlos en marcha. "Después de la Cumbre de la Tierra sentí que necesitaba iniciar un diálogo en nuestro condado acerca de lo que en realidad significa sustentabilidad", comentó Norland.

El programa EcoEquipo del Plan Global de Acción fue otra parte del diálogo. "Esta es la parte que ayuda a las personas a establecer y practicar los hábitos del estilo de vida sustentable", agrega. El programa EcoEquipo ganó el reconocimiento del Concejo de Presidentes en Desarrollo Sustentable y el Programa del Medio Ambiente de las Naciones Unidas como la mejor manera para que los individuos cambien su relación con los recursos naturales.

"Es un esfuerzo continuo" y Norland agrega, "no hay soluciones mágicas, ni panaceas... se tienen que hacer cambios. Necesitamos salir del modelo establecido y entrar a la mentalidad del cambio continuo."

Pat McVeigh, enfermera quirúrgica y participante en un EcoEquipo en Santa Cruz, ayuda a desarrollar los mecanismos para reciclaje acelerado, reciclaje, reducción y un nuevo enfoque para reusar materiales en su lugar de trabajo, el Hospital Dominicano de Santa Cruz. El equipo de acción ecológica del hospital combina los esfuerzos de los departamentos de administración, enfermería, limpieza y alimentos. "Tenemos gente activa y comprometida, y lo que escogemos para comprar tiene un efecto en lo que se produce", comenta McVeigh. El mandato del Condado de Santa Cruz que establece la meta de la reducción del basurero al 50% es un factor importante en los esfuerzos para reducir el desperdicio

del hospital. "Estamos mucho más motivados desde que se dictó este mandato, y lo tomamos como un desafío", comenta McVeigh.

Los cambios han arrojado asombrosos resultados. "Casi el 25% del desecho no se envió al basurero." El estimado de los beneficios totales del programa de reducción de desechos en el Hospital Dominicano representaron casi \$70,000 sólo durante el año pasado.

McVeigh es miembro activo del comité del medio ambiente para la Asociación Nacional de Enfermeras Quirúrgicas. "Es muy alentador saber que, a lo largo del país, la gente que se dedica al cuidado de la salud se está poniendo en contacto con una visión común de hacer la diferencia."

"Parte del reciclaje es que tiene que ser accesible, fácil y obvio", recomienda además "por fortuna tenemos un gobierno local que apoya y refuerza las prácticas que los ecoequipos recomiendan".

Luiz Rodrigues, residente de Santa Cruz, descubrió los ecoequipos cuando trabajaba protegiendo los arrecifes de corales en Key West. "Fue interesante darse cuenta cómo cada cosita está conectada", comenta. "Me volví más atento acerca de los productos que uso en la casa, la utilización de energía, así como el reciclaje; la meta es la misma: proteger los recursos."

Rodrigues además trabaja con el aspecto de la sustentabilidad en su trabajo con International Health Programs (Programas Internacionales de Salud) en Santa Cruz. "Lo que me emociona es que soy capaz de compartir información." La política de los IHP, por sus siglas en inglés, incluso apoya un programa de reciclaje en la adquisición: "Compramos localmente, compramos productos reciclados. Poco a poco de verdad estamos cambiando las cosas. Ahora la gente viene y nos pregunta cómo puede participar."

Rodrigues también asistió a la Cumbre de la Tierra. Dice que mientras reconocer la causa de la degradación del ambiente es el principio, "el problema principal es la sobreutilización de recursos. Una cantidad tremenda de cosas se va a los basureros, y esto pone más tensión en el planeta, el ambiente y nuestra salud", dijo. "Entre más reciclemos... es una manera de ser responsables."

Para saber más acerca del Plan de acción Global para la Tierra y su Programa de Ecoequipo llama a Ecology Action (Acción Ecológica) del Condado de Santa Cruz al 427-1357. Investigación y publicación apoyada en parte por el Programa de Becas para la Reducción de Desperdicio del Condado de Santa Cruz

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Learning to Recycle With Eco-Teams

Robin Atwood

Inspired by the 1992 Earth Summit ecology conference in Rio de Janeiro, a network of committed people is working to establish the conference's standards in Santa Cruz, from organizing *EcoTeams*, to influencing the county's general plan. The concepts and practices of sustainability are gaining ground.

Ecoteams (small groups of friends, coworkers, family members, or neighbors), work using expert guidelines over the course of six monthly meetings, learning to reduce garbage, eliminate water waste, improve home energy efficiency, use better transportation and more.

Santa Cruz county resident Jeanne Nordland attended the Rio conference and brought the "Sustainable Community Development Standards" and the "Sustainable Lifestyle Campaign" back home with her. "After the Earth Summit I felt I needed to start a conversation in our county about what sustainability really means," she said.

Bringing Global Action Plan's EcoTeam program to the county was another part of that conversation. "This is the part that helps people establish and practice sustainable lifestyle habits," said Nordland. The EcoTeam program has earned the recognition of the President's Council on Sustainable Development and the United Nations' Environment Program as the best way for individuals to change their relationship to natural resources.

"It's a continuous effort," Nordland agrees, "there is no magic pill, no panacea...it takes making shifts. We need to get out of the fix-it mode and into the continuous change mode."

Santa Cruz EcoTeam participant Pat McVeigh is helping to fuel an accelerated precycling, recycling, reducing, and reusing approach at Dominican Hospital in Santa Cruz, where she is a surgical nurse. The hospital's ecology action taskforce combines the efforts of management, nursing, housekeeping and food services departments. "We have active and committed people here, and what we choose to buy has

an effect on what is produced," said McVeigh. Santa Cruz County's mandatory 50% landfill reduction goal is a big factor in the facility's efforts to cut down on waste. "We have become a lot more motivated since the mandate, taking it as a challenge," she said.

The changes have brought about impressive results. "About 25% was immediately diverted from the landfill." The estimated account of total benefits from the waste reduction program at Dominican represented nearly \$70,000 last year alone.

McVeigh is an active member of the environmental committee for the National Association of Operating Room Nurses. "It's particularly encouraging knowing that, across the country, health care resources people are connecting with a common vision of making a difference."

"Part of recycling is that it has to be available, easy and obvious," she recommends, adding, "fortunately we have a local government that supports and strengthens the practices that the Ecoteams recommend."

Santa Cruz resident Luiz Rodrigues discovered EcoTeams while working to protect coral reefs in Key West. "It was interesting how all the little points just kind of connected," Rodrigues said. "I became more concerned about the products I use at home, energy utilization, recycling as well; the goal is the same—protecting resources."

Rodrigues also works at sustainability at his job with International Health Programs in Santa Cruz, "This is what excites me, how I am able to share the information." IHP's policy even supports a recycling program in purchasing: "We buy local, buy recycled. Slowly we have really changed things a lot. People now come and ask how they can participate."

Rodrigues also attended the Earth Summit. He says while recognizing the cause of the degradation of the environment is a start, "the main problem is over-utilization of resources. A tremendous amount of stuff is going to the landfill, and this is putting major stress on the planet, the environment, and on our health," he said. "The more we recycle...it's one way to be responsible."

To find out more about There's a Global Action Plan for the Earth and their EcoTeam Program call Ecology Action of Santa Cruz county at 427-1357.

This series of ecology forum articles is partially funded by a grant from the County of Santa Cruz, Public Works Department.



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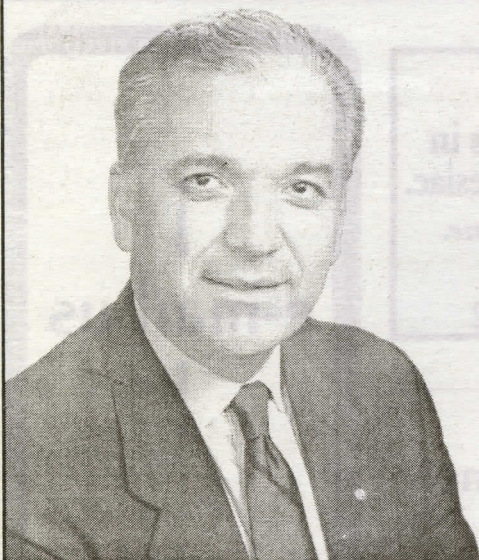
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The Immigration Debate TURNED UPSIDE DOWN

Sam Quiñones

SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE, MEXICO

America's crackdown on illegal immigrants is finding an odd echo in this sleepy town in central Mexico. Townspeople are up in arms over the growing number of illegal Americans living here.

Last month, just after the videotape of Riverside County sheriffs beating Mexican immigrants aired nationwide, the town vented its feelings in an anti-U.S. immigrant march. About 150 residents — mainly farmworkers and people with relatives in the United States — demanded the ouster of illegal American immigrants. They claimed that Americans buy homes and rent them out without paying taxes on the proceeds, as required by law. Others, they say, work without visas or exploit Mexican workers by not paying them overtime.

Americans who live here dispute the claims.

"Nobody will hire us without proper documentation," says Sareda Milosz, who moved to Mexico from California 20 years ago and now edits the town's English-language newspaper, Atención San Miguel. "There may be two or three. But most everybody around here who's working is definitely documented."

All this is a growing cause for concern in a town where the main activities seem to be shopping and sipping coffee.

San Miguel looks more like a travel poster than anything else. Its winding cobblestone streets are lined with restaurants, stores with hand-crafted goods, and brightly painted homes. A tranquil central plaza abuts a multi-spired church that is majestically lit at night.

So why has this picture postcard town turned the American immigration debate on its head?

San Miguel — pop. 80,000 — has perhaps the largest number of U.S. immigrants per capita of any town in Mexico. About 2,500 foreigners live here year-round, most of them retirees from the U.S. They are joined by several thousand more during the winter — mostly snowbirds and art and language students.

U.S. immigration here began in the 1940s, when San Miguel was a hangout for artists and bohemians of every stripe. Neal Casady, the model for the central character in

Jack Kerouac's "On the Road," died in San Miguel in 1968.

Today Americans have insinuated themselves into town life. The mayor's mother is American. Americans are moving forces behind a variety of clubs that offer services to old people and children. They are important employers of maids and gardeners. Some now own businesses. Many own homes. The fact that Americans own some of the nicest, oldest homes in San Miguel rankles a number of residents.

Meanwhile, the buying power of the Americans has made life in San Miguel expensive by Mexican standards. In addition, people here complain that many landlords rent only to Americans, who are more likely to be gone in six months.

Prices for real estate and cars are in dollars. Signs announcing their sale are always in English. "Some people have been here 20, 25 years and still don't speak Spanish," complains Eduardo Lera, owner of a computer store and a member of the San Miguel Citizens Forum, which sponsored the march last month.

Still, there's a conviviality in San Miguel that only the American immigration debate, and the Riverside beating have undermined. The march left Americans feeling uneasy, according to Milosz. "I felt embarrassed and threatened at the same time," she says.

Since then, the issue has settled below the surface of town life.

"They're treated well here," says Eric Ramirez, one of the march's organizers. "What we'd like is that our people be treated the same way over there."

Currently the march's organizers are gathering documentation on illegal American immigrants but they're not sure what they will do with it. The Mexican government has as much interest in keeping illegal Americans out of the country as it does in keeping Mexicans in, which is to say very little. And San Miguelenses have no say in what goes on north of the border.

All of which leads some townspeople to fear the frustration will grow "into some kind of retaliation (against Americans)," Ramirez says.

"People are truly mad. They come here two or three times a day to see what else can be done. They keep hearing about mistreatment up there," he notes. "But we also know that we need (the Americans)."

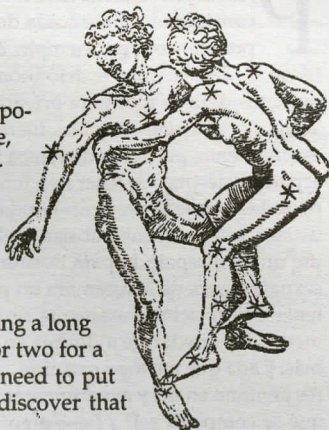
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The Month of Gemini

by Shaman

Gemini (May 21 - June 20)

As the summer heats up, so will you. The potential for hot passion and romance is there, but so is the heat of anger and over emotion- alism. You will need to balance these two forces carefully, or people may turn an ugly heat back on you.



Cancer (June 21 - July 22)

Serenity may finally come your way. Planning a long vacation, a weekend trip, or even an hour or two for a frivolous excursion may be just what you need to put your problems in perspective. You could discover that things aren't as unsolvable as you think.

Leo (July 23 - August 22)

How many times does someone have to tell you not to carry the burdens of the world on your shoulders before you listen? Figure out what is most important to you and pursue that cause with extra diligence. Let some other projects go. No sense in doing a number of sloppy jobs when you can accomplish a couple of tasks with precision.

Virgo (August 23 - September 22)

Unrequited love is looming over your head. It's time to work up the gumption to talk to that beautiful stranger you've been noticing these past months. Who knows, it may lead to nothing, but it could develop into an exciting romance.

Libra (September 23 - October 22)

I know you've been wanting to lavish gifts, meals, and treats on friends loved ones, but do remember you have a limited budget. Watch your finances now so you don't get yourself into trouble when the bills come. Think of the nice things you can do for others that won't cost the bank.

Scorpio (October 23 - November 21)

Worry less about thinking and more about doing. Though you normally have no problem making decisions, for some reason you've been fixating too long on things you could have taken care of months ago. Bring that spontaneity out.

Sagittarius (November 22 - December 21)

Who says you need to intervene in someone else's problems? If it doesn't involve you, best to mind your own business. You can always be a good friend by just listening. People aren't always ready to hear the truth, and if you tell them before they've asked for it, you may wind up losing friends.

Capricorn (December 22 - January 19)

The sun is out, so get outside. Turn the television off, go outside, take a walk, go swimming, go have some active fun. You can vegetate when the rain comes back. Now is a good time to start that exercise program you've been postponing.

Aquarius (January 20 - February 18)

This month you're the opposite of Scorpio. Spend more time looking before you leap. Spontaneity and excitement aren't in order just now. Be sure to think through all of the pros and cons before you take that next adventure.

Pisces (February 19 - March 20)

Is that more love I see on your horizon? If you're in a relationship now, be ready for spending more time learning about each other in positive ways. If you're single, look around you. Somebody wants to tell you something but is too shy. Make the first move.

Aries (March 21 - April 20)

You've been much too self-indulgent lately. It's time to give back to those you ask too much from. Treat someone to dinner. Better yet, volunteer for a community project. No time like the present to discover how nice it is to give as well as receive.

Taurus (April 21 - May 20)

You may have experienced some personal turmoil lately, but it's easy to take care of. If you're still having the same argument over and over, stop and try to see from the other person's point of view. Compromise is closer than you think. If that doesn't work, go out and buy something for yourself. If you're not going to learn to work with others, you're going to have to learn how to be selfish and alone.

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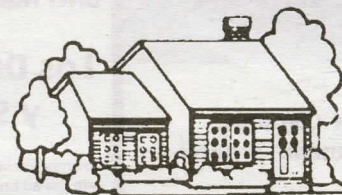
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ISADORA

Todo sobre el sexo

Ahora cada quien a su cama

P: En la primera cita tuve relaciones sexuales con él, es un amante gentil y considerado. Enseguida del encuentro sexual comentó algunas de sus preferencias, por ejemplo, que no le gustan los besos con la boca abierta (A mí sí). Pero lo que me dejó anonadada es que no durmiera conmigo: me dijo que considera su recámara privada y no le gusta que le molesten en ese lugar. Tuvimos relaciones sexuales fuera de la recámara, lo cual me pareció sexy en ese momento, pero cuando estaba lista para dormir me explicó su necesidad de separarse después de tener relaciones. Aunque quiso explicarlo con mucho tacto, de todas maneras me sentí herida. Dijo que sabía que era un problema poco usual, y que tenía que trabajar en él. Incluso el muy fresco se ofreció a prepararme un área separada para dormir. Desde entonces hemos tenido encuentros sexuales fuera de la recámara un par de veces y pensé que podía adaptarme a tener una relación puramente sexual, sin expectativas emocionales, y obviamente, sin quedarme a dormir en su casa; sin embargo no es así, quiero algo más. Cada que me topo con él se comporta agradable, como si tuviera un interés genuino en mí y experimentamos una fuerte atracción sexual mutua. ¿Por qué se comporta así? ¿Tiene algo así como fobia al charquito de semen? (¡Es una broma!) La sección de libros de autoayuda no tiene nada acerca de "Hombres que literalmente no pueden dormir con las mujeres y las mujeres que quieren que lo hagan."

R: Es el momento para una gran confesión y sabrás que mi respuesta puede ser tendenciosa. Tengo un modesto grupo de conocidos, presentes y anteriores que saben acerca de mis habilidades en la intimidad. Brindo una buena relación íntima y tampoco me gusta compartir mi espacio para dormir. Dormir juntos no significa intimidad o la falta de ella, tampoco implica "simplemente" tener una relación basada en el sexo. Hacer el amor, dormir separados, y quizás reunirse en la mañana, reír, pasar el rato, compartir sentimientos y pensamientos, puede convertirse en una relación muy íntima... con momentos de privacidad para dormir, así como la mayoría de la gente los toma cuando va al baño. Tal vez tu hombre ronca, rechina los dientes, habla dormido, o se orina en la cama —conductas que él no quiere discutir. El disculparse por sus idiosincrasias sexuales, sería equivalente a disculparse por sus preferencias culinarias, por ejemplo: no querer que el puré de papas toque los chicharos que están en su plato. El punto es no tomar a mal quien es y lo que es (preguntar "¿Por qué es tan raro?") sino decidir, como lo has hecho, si puedes vivir con estas peculiaridades o no. Tal vez quieras reevaluar la situación. Una fuerte atracción sexual mutua con un amante gentil y considerado, incluso sin besos profundos o plática de almohada, no es para ser desecharla tan a la ligera.

P: ¿Existe algún lugar donde una persona pueda ir para que le ayuden a solucionar problemas sexuales tales como eyaculación prematura y cómo sentirse cómodo en la cama con una mujer? No he tenido relaciones sexuales con una pareja por cerca de siete años. Siendo un padre soltero, nunca tuve suficiente dinero como para salir con alguien y pagar la cuenta. Ahora que los hijos son adolescentes tengo más tiempo y dinero para salir, pero siento que para mí es muy difícil hacerlo. ¿Cuál es tu consejo?

R: Busca un grupo que enfrente los mismos dilemas tal como Padres sin Parejas, o una clase de habilidades sociales como las que imparten la YMCA, el Centro Comunitario Judío, Learning Annex, o similares. Otra opción son los/las terapeutas por teléfono que publicitan especialidades en asuntos sexuales o relaciones de pareja, y si encuentras a alguien que trabaje con sustitución sexual, mejor. La terapia de sustitución es la ruta más directa que conozco para aprender a controlar la eyaculación y desarrollar confianza en las relaciones. Si no, empieza con grupos sociales o clases y ve lo que pasa. Buena suerte. El primer paso es el más difícil.

P: Estoy en una situación en la cual mi vida en la casa es extremadamente conservadora mientras que mi vida social no. Mis padres son a la antigüita y sus puntos de vista sobre asuntos como la homosexualidad son estrechos y pasados de moda. Desde hace pocos años he aceptado el hecho de que me gustan las mujeres y los hombres por igual: soy bisexual. Hace poco mi mamá hizo algunos comentarios que bien podrían sugerir que ella sabe mi situación. Es más me dijo varias veces, así nada más, sin motivo, que si fuera gay o bisexual me expulsaría de la familia. ¿Debería enfrentarla o mantener la boca cerrada? El silencio me está enloqueciendo por completo.

R: Esta difícil decisión sólo tú la puedes tomar. PFLAG, por sus siglas en inglés, Padres y Amigos de Lesbianas y Gays (202-683-4200) tiene sucursales en varias ciudades y publica algunos excelentes folletos sobre el proceso de "salir del closet" y cómo manejar la oposición familiar. Por supuesto, no existe una manera de hacerlo que siempre funcione, pero puedes encontrar algún consejo útil de estos voluntarios sinceros que han estado en ambos lados del asunto.

ISADORA

Sex + Human Relations

Now I lay me down to sleep

Q: On a first date I had sex with a gentle and considerate lover. Immediately after sex, he verbalized a few preferences, like he doesn't particularly like open-mouth kissing (I do). But what most disturbs me is he won't sleep with me. He says he considers his bed private and doesn't want to be disturbed there. We had sex outside the bedroom, which I thought was sexy at the time, but when I was ready to sleep, he explained his need to separate after sex. No matter how tactfully he explained himself I felt very hurt. He said he knew it was a unique problem he needed to work on. He had the nerve to offer to set up a separate sleeping area for me. We've had non-bedroom sex a couple of times since then, and I thought I could adjust to seeing him, for a sex-based relationship without emotional expectations and obviously no sleepovers, but I want more emotionally. Now when I bump into him, he is nice, behaves as if he is genuinely interested, and we both convey strong sexual feelings toward each other. Why is he like this? Does he have a wet-spot phobia? (Just kidding!) The self-help book section has nothing on "Men Who Literally Cannot Sleep with Women and the Women Who Want Them To."

A: Big confession here so you will know my response may be biased. There is a modest size crowd of my present and former dear ones who will attest to my intimacy skills. I give great intimacy and I don't like to share my sleeping space, either. Sleep sharing does not need to equal intimacy, or the lack thereof to mean "merely" a sex-based relationship. Making love, sleeping separately, and perhaps again coming together (in any way that is taken) in the morning, laughing together, hanging out, sharing feelings and thoughts, can make for a very intimate relationship with privacy breaks for sleeping the way most folks have for bathroom time. Maybe your man snores, grits his teeth, talks in his sleep, or wets the bed—behaviors he's just not willing to discuss. He need not apologize for his sexual idiosyncrasies any more than ones of food, like not wanting his mashed potatoes to touch the peas on his plate. At issue here is not making him wrong for who and what he is (as in "Why is he so weird?") but deciding, as you have done, whether you can live with his quirks. Maybe you'll want to reevaluate? A strong mutual sexual attraction with a gentle and considerate lover, even without deep kisses or pillow talk, is not to be dismissed lightly.

Q: Is there somewhere a person can go for help about sexual problems like premature ejaculation and how to feel comfortable in bed with a woman? I have been absent from sex with a partner for about seven years. Being a single parent, I never had enough cash to go out on a date and pay for a sitter. Now that the kids are teenagers I have more time and money to go out, but feel very uneasy doing so. What's your advice?

A: Seek out a congenial group such as Parents Without Partners, or a social-skills class given by the YMCA, Jewish Community Center, Learning Annex, or the like. Phone therapists who advertise specialties in sexual or relationship issues; and, if there are any who work with sexual surrogates, all the better. Surrogacy therapy is the most direct route I know to learn ejaculatory control and relationship confidence. If not, start with social groups or classes and see what happens. Good luck. The first step is the hardest.

Q: I'm in a situation where my home life is extremely conservative while my social life is not. My parents are from the old world. Their views on issues like homosexuality are narrow-minded and outdated. For a few years I've accepted the fact that I like women along with men; I'm bisexual. Recently my mom has dropped hints that might very well suggest that she know this. What's more, she told me several times in passing that if I were indeed gay or bi, that she'd have me thrown out of the family. Should I play her bluff, or keep quiet? The silence is driving me absolutely insane.

A: This difficult decision only you can make. PFLAG, Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (202-638-4200), has chapters in many cities, and publishes some excellent pamphlets on the coming-out process and dealing with family opposition. There isn't one right way that always works, of course, but you may find some helpful advice from these very sincere volunteers who have been on both sides of the issue.

Isadora Alman, MA, MFCC, conducts her practice in San Francisco. Questions can be sent to her c/o El Andar, P.O. Box 7745, Santa Cruz, CA 95063.

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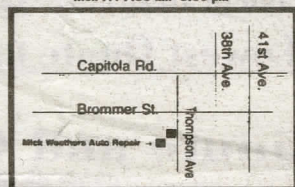
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