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December 2021

Volume 9



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An Interview with Pancho Claus El Prímo de Santa

Alberto: How are you, como estas?

Pancho: Muy Bien, I am good.

Alberto: So, is this a busy time for you, pre-Christmas?

Pancho: Si but not as much as my cousin Santo?

Alberto: Santo?

Pancho: Yes, most people call him Santa, but really it is Santo.

Alberto: Wow, I never really knew that. Is Claus his real last name?

Pancho: Not really. But I don't know if I can share more about that. With social media the way it is, I better leave it there.

Alberto: So, what kind of pre-Christmas work are you involved in?

Pancho: Oh, Pos I help with all Spanish language requests and coordinate deliveries in the Southwest.

Alberto: I know you usually come out to Fort Worth for the Tree of Hope (Arbol de la Esperanza Christmas program)

Pancho: Si I have been visiting los ninos de Fort Worth for over 20 years and I love to check in on my good friends de LULAC Council 4568

Alberto: So, will you be here this year?

Pancho: Pos Si and we are planning a special surprise this year?

Alberto: That's sounds exciting, any hints?

Pancho: I can only say that it something that all the ninos will like and can enjoy for years to come.

Alberto: Well, I guess we all will just have to wait for December 18th to find out.

Pancho: Si and if I can I want to ask your readers who want to help with the Christmas Fiesta on December 18th to contact LULAC Council 4568. I know they would appreciate the help because besides the gifts for the children they give fruit, turkeys, food bags plus pan dulce and drinks for the celebration.

Alberto: Thank you Pancho and yes If you want to help with the Tree of Hope program contact me and I will put you in touch with the good people at LULAC 4568.

Pancho: Thank you Amigo and look forward to seeing you on December 18th.

Alberto: Okay Pancho take care, the ninos will be waiting.

(To request information on Tree of Hope Christmas Program email albertogovea@amigosnbusiness.com)





WHY RENTS ARE GOING UP

by **Alfredo Sanchez**

I have been a landlord for about 30 years. I remember when I was around 7+ years old (1950 through the 1960's) my father had rental property. His properties did not include appliances. It was up to the tenant to provide his/her own appliances. Providing a dishwasher, garbage disposal, microwave, ceiling fans, fire alarms, etc. was unheard of. Today, tenants move in with only furniture, clothes, and television. All kitchen appliances are, in most cases, provided by the landlord. In my father's time, taxes and insurance must have been reasonable because I never heard my father complain about paying taxes or insurance.

I have heard recently from several sources, that the reason rent has gotten so expensive is that Landlords have gotten greedy. I would like to shed a little light on the increase of rents. Texas property taxes have gotten very expensive especially for Landlords. Landlords do not receive any of the tax breaks homeowners get, such as the homestead exemption even though landlords provide housing to the most vulnerable populations (low income, elderly, young families with children, people in low paying jobs etc.) Depending upon their status, homeowners can receive multiple tax break on their land while landlords do not get a single property tax break. Landlords pay the full value of the property taxes. Senior citizens, no matter what their property is worth, or their net worth, get up to 5 exemptions in Denton County. Veterans, depending on their disability, can have as much as 100% of their taxes erased. Tax exemptions, considered by homeowners as a great deal, shifts a higher tax burden to landlords who themselves pass it on to tenants as higher rent. For a rental to remain profitable a landlord's taxes must hover at around 15% of total income from the property. This means that about 2 months of rent goes to taxes. Then there is insurance. When it comes to insurance, homeowners who bundle their insurance have their premiums reduced. Such a thing does not exist for the landlord. Insurance premiums vary substantially from company to company. A "landlord insurance policy costs about 25%



more than a homeowners insurance policy for the same property. The primary reason for the difference in cost revolve around who is occupying the home". It is not always the case, but most people take care of their own stuff much better than when stuff belongs to someone else. There are many more repairs on rental property than with owner occupied properties. These repairs include both structural and appliance repairs, (stove, refrigerator, microwave, dishwasher, central heat, and air, both inside and outside units}. Unlike when it is an owner-occupied home, renters want things fixed yesterday. Landlords are available 24/7 to make emergency repairs. Many landlords do not own their property outright so they have monthly payments to make beyond taxes, insurance, and repairs. Many landlords are mom and pop businesses that struggle from month to month. Therefore, landlords are not greedy; they are merely responding to the outside forces on their businesses just like any other business does.

THE NEXT TIME YOU ARE ON 1-35 approaching 28th Street

(Exit 54A) in Fort Worth, look for the brand-new Cesar Chavez Memorial Highway signs. And, if you are in the company of people that may not know of his legacy, please take a minute to tell them about Cesar.

By A. Govea

Cesar Chavez Memorial Highway EXIT 54 A

Tell them about how he was born to Mexican American parents who lost their land during the Great Depression. Tell them how that led them to spend their lives toiling in the fields. Not only to feed their families but ours as well. And tell them how they did so in conditions that would compare to a third-world country.

Then tell them how Cesar joined his parents in the fields. Often resulting in him starting school later than most. Tell them how he honorably served our country in the Navy, only to return to the same conditions in the fields as before. Tell them that back then, unless you were a White Anglo Saxon - you were a second-class citizen. Tell them why before, people were more concerned about basic human rights, rather than civil rights. Tell them that rather than accepting all

this adversity as, "Just the way it is", he knew there was power in numbers, and working for a common cause would make a difference.

Fast Forward to 1962. Cesar Chavez, along with Dolores Huerta concluded the only way to help improve conditions for farmworkers was to start a new Labor Union. So, they founded the United Farm Workers Union, the UFW. With the iconic slogan of 'Si Se Puede' (Yes, We Can). A slogan that many years later, President Obama repurposed for his campaign as, "Yes, We Can!" Tell them that their story is so much better than any show on Netflix. Encourage others to visit their local library and ask for a book about the UFW Cesar and Dolores. Tell them that turning a page is a lot more enjoyable than swiping on a phone.

Tell them when they sit down for Thanksgiving dinner this year to think about all the faceless people that helped make their meal possible. Last, tell them that there is a lot more work to do. We must do our part for our community's progress to continue. And part of that work is to honor the work of our ancestors, like Cesar and Dolores, by sharing it with others. An example of this is the journey that got us to this part of the story. As you go past the Cesar Freeway sign and the signs that bear his name from Beach and 28th to main Street. And from Main Street and 28th, you will see the Dolores Huerta signs, ending on Jacksboro Highway. Know this, the city did

not just decide to put those signs up because they woke up one day and decided it would be a nice thing to do.

The opposite is true: it took close to 10 years to make it happen. I will not go into the details, but I can say it was very difficult. Some people in our community would not support or did not want the name change in their area. So, I cannot end this story without thanking the membership of LULAC Council 4568. And others that joined us by speaking in support at the city council. Those groups include the Cesar Chavez committee, LULAC Council 4743, and Councilman Carlos Flores.

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Vaccinating kids can help win the battle against COVID, experts argue

By: Jenny Manrique, Ethnic Media Services

Nearly one million children ages 5 to 11 have been vaccinated in the United States since the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine was approved for this age group on September 20. Efforts to immunize 28 million infants could mark a turning point in the battle to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, but many parents are still reluctant to vaccinate their kids.

“We received phone calls, emails and text messages from families that were just eagerly awaiting the vaccine for their children,” said Jennifer Miller, a pediatrician with East Bay Pediatrics during an Ethnic Media Services briefing on Nov 12. “But we also have another group of patients who have been more cautious and more hesitant.”

The first group of families, Miller noted, were looking forward to resuming some semblance of normalcy without having to worry about isolating or quarantining their children: being able to send them back to school or traveling together as the holidays come.

The latter, mostly families of color, are afraid to vaccinate their children because they do not know the long-term consequences of the shot, or because they are afraid of side effects such as infertility (denied by scientists) or myocarditis (inflammation in the heart that has occurred exceptionally in men after the second dose and it is very easy to treat.)

Although many parents have been vaccinated, they prefer a wait-and-see approach when it comes to their children because they feel the burden of making decisions on behalf of people too young to decide for themselves.

Dr. Miller cites the mental health impacts she is seeing among her young patients as another reason for ensuring they get vaccines.

“Not only are we dealing with a pandemic because of COVID, but we are dealing with a mental health pandemic,” she said. “Children and adolescents have been removed from their school routine, their peers, their sports and their clubs. They are depressed and anxious due to the loss of family members to COVID; they experience frequent sadness.

“These children need to get back into school full time,” the pediatrician added. “We have kindergarteners that didn’t learn how to read and kids with special needs who didn’t get their own occupational therapy.” These educational disparities occur much more commonly in families of color. “If those families do not go out and get vaccinated, these kids will continue to fall behind and won’t be able to compete with their peers.”

There have been more than 6 million positive COVID cases in children in the United States since the pandemic began, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), resulting in 64,000 hospitalizations and 650 deaths. That’s why CDC

Director Rochelle Wollensky endorsed the advisory group’s recommendation on immunization practices to move on mass childhood vaccination.

“There is no doubt that children are less at risk for severe disease from COVID,” said Monica Gandhi, Professor of Medicine at UC San Francisco School of Medicine. “Even though the risk is lower, during the Delta variant surge, COVID was the sixth leading cause of death in children.”

Gandhi cited three reasons why children should be vaccinated: to protect

them against the virus; to reduce transmission to others, especially older parents and grandparents; and because the dose is safe. These reasons are particularly relevant for communities of color which have a higher incidence of diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol, making them more vulnerable to COVID.



“During the (clinical) trial with 2,268 children, there was a reduction in COVID symptomatic infections of 90.7%.” Gandhi said. Because of the rare cases of myocarditis, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized Pfizer to provide a 10 mg dose for children ages 5 to 11, in contrast to the 30 mg that adults receive. In Moderna’s case, the dose is higher: 100 mg.

Gandhi suggests that there will be greater efficacy in children if the doses are given more than three weeks apart, based on data from the National Institute of Public Health in Quebec: Canada chose to administer the doses eight weeks apart which was 92% effective versus 82% effectiveness when the doses were given closer together.

“We are still at about 68% for the vaccination rate across the country among eligibles over 12 years of age,” Gandhi said. “With 28 million vaccinated children, the virus will be able to find fewer and fewer susceptible hosts.”

MISINFORMATION AND FEARS

Maria Meraz, Founder-Director of Parent Engagement Academy, works annually with around 3,000 parents in Los Angeles and Ventura counties, 90% of them immigrants and first-generation Latinos. She said that the misinformation spread about the vaccine on networks such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and YouTube is “terrible”.

“These parents are low-income families and many of them don’t have access to (cable) TV... they get their information from sources that are not the best such as friends and family.” Meraz works with several school districts that provide social-emotional support services to guide parents through a dilemma that causes them great anxiety: While many do not agree with vaccination, they know they have no other option.

“They have to send their children to school because they have to go to work,” Meraz said.

Madison Sandoval, a Bay Area school nurse, cited a new fear that children who have not been vaccinated may wind up becoming targets for cyberbullying. “I can definitely see the potential for bullying to happen, and that’s why it’s really important for schools to get ahead of that kind of dialogue and really focus on vaccines’ benefits, not assigning blame or shaming any child because ultimately it is not their decision,” Sandoval said.

Sandoval recalled that masking and ventilation are really effective measures to prevent the spread of COVID within schools and that as long as vaccines are not mandatory to attend classrooms, they should be implemented.

THE DISAPPEARED

By Carla Espinoza

If your sister, wife, or mother vanished suddenly, you would expect the authorities to immediately launch an investigation into their disappearance with the hope they find them before it is too late. In Mexico, there are more than 73,000 missing people. The missing are known by most in Mexico as *The Disappeared*.

Some believe that Mexican authorities are overwhelmed with the violence and war against drug gangs but, others say that the police do not care about the missing women. The families of the missing women plead to the police for help, but the resources are not always available. Many turn to social media to spread the word. Those with money or support from others purchase entire billboards in hopes someone knows something about their missing loved one.

In 2019 after the alleged rape of a woman by four Mexico City police officers, activists traveled to Mexico City to protest the rising violence against women and femicide. Then they went back in 2020, but this time the mothers of the victims and other protesters took over Mexico City Human Rights Commission and utilizes the building as a woman's shelter. Mexico's, *Glitter Revolution* is underway, and the women of Mexico City are refusing to be ignored.

While the citizens of Mexico City make drastic efforts to bring awareness to the femicide epidemic happening in their communities, others take matters into their own hands and look for men who commit these heinous crimes. Frida Guerrero, age fifty has made it her mission to track down these alleged murderers and helps bring them to justice. The fearless journalist puts their own life in jeopardy to bring

awareness to missing person cases that may have otherwise gone completely unnoticed by the public. With the help of her tens of thousands of followers, she collects clues to piece together information about the alleged killers. The Prosecutor's office for Mexico has worked with her on several cases.

Growing up in Ecatepec, Mexico, Guerra usually felt safe. Even though around her violence was increasing. In a span of just two years between 2015-2017- 1258 women were murdered in Ecatepec. After graduating high school, she would attend university and study psychology. But again, despite the news of women being murdered in Juarez, she still felt safe as she never personally witnessed the violence herself. It wasn't until 2006 when her boyfriend broke her nose after months of abuse, did she realize the reality for women experiencing violence. Guerrero has admitted that she never felt like a victim even though she was experiencing violent abuse.

She moved to Oaxaca, where she joined a liberal radio collective and began investigating abuse against women and corruption within the local government. Although she was working to protect women, she was putting herself in harm's way at the same time. As a journalist who rallied to protect women and children, she received many threats against her life. She was beaten by an unknown attacker and survived. But the attempts to scare her were useless. Guerra cannot be stopped.

Guerrero continues to use her influence to track down alleged murderers and is still helping authorities bring them to justice. In a sad twist of fate, in 2019, just a few blocks away from where she lived, the body of Jessica Carrillo was found along with two other women who were buried under the porch. Guerrero immediately went into action to help find the victim's killer. Police pointed to the primary resident of the home, Oscar Garcia as the main suspect. Unbenounced to the ambitious journalist, this investigation would take her into the mind of a dark and dangerous person.

It all began when she posted to her Twitter feed asking her followers for clues about the alleged killer. She eventually discovered a Facebook account using a false name, but the profile picture was Oscar Garcia. To her horror, she found a post containing Jessica Carrillo along with the two other victim's missing person notices. The caption read, "To catch a serial killer, you must think like one". It was clear to Guerrero that Oscar Garcia had no remorse for the death of the three innocent women. The revelation was infuriating. She decided to make a post of

her own. She posted a picture of Guzman with the caption, "Óscar García Guzmán is an idiot who thinks he's so great. I'm waiting for you here,". The post caught his attention.

Later, Garcia sent Guerrero a friend request on Facebook with the same profile with the fake name. He included a message that described the crime scene and gave the names of five people he claimed to have murdered. However, there was one name missing on that list, and for that – he had a reason, "I ran out of time and I couldn't put down Jessica. How do I know this? I'm Óscar," the message read, in all caps. "Do I have your attention now?" Guerrero had all the proof needed to know this was the real Oscar Garcia.

After giving the messages to the lead investigator for Jessica Carrillo's case, they asked her to keep chatting with him. Guerrero continued to have conversations with the alleged murderer, often waking up to disturbing texts messages. Oddly enough, Garcia seemed to be most concerned for his pets that were left behind. He often threatened to cut off all contact unless he received photographic proof that his dog and cat were alive and well. But Guerrero knew coming up with proof was impossible. The dog was put down during the police search for Jessica. For three treacherous weeks, the journalist was a prisoner to the alleged serial killer. She was forced to put up with his disturbing taunts, and his unrealistic take on life. Garcia began to become increasingly violent with his words and eventually became enraged that he still hasn't seen his cat. He threatened to kill one more woman if he didn't get a video of his cat. She complied with his demand.

Finally, in December 2019 Garcia was found by authorities while he was enjoying a sandwich outside of the National Polytechnic Institute in Mexico City. In a sad attempt to thwart his arrest, he threatened police with supposed poison candy but was quickly apprehended and taken into custody. But Guerra's work was still not done and with one down, there were hundreds more to go.

Frida Guerrero continues to investigate cases of missing or murdered women, often without the help of authorities and at times – without the help of her community. According to the NGO Mexicans Against Corruption, 15,000 violent deaths of women occurred between 2012 and 2018, and only 3,056 were investigated as femicide cases. Despite identifying an additional 2,700 cases that fit the criteria. And out of those, only 739 men were ultimately sentenced. So even though the numbers are stacked against Guerrero, her mission is clear: Catch the Killers.

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JUSTICE IS NOT BLIND

(Rittenhouse Verdict)

By A. Torres

Like most Americans who were keeping up with the trial- the verdict did not surprise me. Especially since it was clear that the Judge (Bruce Schroeder) in the case was clearly putting his thumb on the side of the defendant. It was clear the side he was on when he would not allow the people who were killed to be called victims. Instead, they had to be referred to as looters or rioters. In addition, he threw out the misdemeanor weapons charge early on.

Further, he was always ready to yell at the prosecution for anything he saw as a possible violation or just annoyed him. The demeanor of the Judge sent clear signals to the jury what he thought of this case. Now of course most would argue the verdict is still in the hands of the jury picked by both the prosecution and the defense. But this time, the defendant picked the jury by pulling names out of a hat. Is that illegal? No, it is not. But it is weird and not common practice.

So of course, if you are not a lawyer or have any legal training you must at least assume the Judge knows best. Now, is that right? No but it is a fact. Add the fact that the defendant was young and white. In fact, as someone that has spent time in Juvenile court as a family advocate, I at times have seen this in person. The difference in treatment of minority defendants as compared to White



defendants is sometimes obvious. Plus, I'm sure Rittenhouse's emotional outburst with crocodile tears had some effect.

So, the belief that Justice is blind may not quite be true - is it? Some maybe be thinking to themselves, "Well what can you do?"

Sadly, the families of the VICTIMS (Joseph Rosenbaum 36, Anthony Huber 26) have lost a son a husband a brother and uncle. Think about their Thanksgiving table, their Christmas and just not for this year but forever. Clearly there is more work that we must all do to ensure that we adhere to the words in the constitution that reads, "All men are created equal." And for that to happen we must exercise our right to vote. To ensure that those we entrust with our legal system adhere to the belief that, "Justice is blind." And if we don't - this will continue and next it could hit closer to home. By now you heard he (Rittenhouse) has been made into a hero by the wacky right. Trump had him visit Mara Largo, he has been offered an internship by some Congressmen and Senators. And worse a congressional medal has also been brought up. So, if you don't

believe that people like hm deserve hero status, Get Out and Vote!

I finished this article as Ahmad Arbery's verdict came in. Thank God all three defendants were found guilty, so there is still hope.



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TEGUCIGALPA — A teenage boy is crouched to the side of a building entrance, his tear-stained face staring blankly past the police ribbon stretched across the intersection. Inside, a group of indigenous Hondurans are gathered, having traveled to the capital to denounce what they say is the government's ongoing theft of their ancestral lands.

“Sorry about all of this,” the security guard remarks, gesturing to the scene around him. “This is Honduras.”

On November 28, Hondurans will cast their vote for the Central American nation's next president. The election comes amid a pall of violence and socioeconomic conditions that rank alongside Haiti as among the lowest in the western hemisphere. For many, Honduras warrants the status of a failed state, and yet there are those here who say the coming elections offer the best — and perhaps last — chance to turn things around.

“These elections are an opportunity to recover the democratic process and to confront the multiple crises impacting the country,” says Gustavo Irias, executive director of CESPAD, a nonprofit that advocates on behalf of Honduras' marginalized communities. “This is a chance for Honduras to recover its sense as a nation.”

That sense of nationhood was shattered in 2009 when the Honduran military ousted former president Manuel Zelaya in a move the United States is thought to have played more than a passive role in. Since then, Honduras has remained under the control of the right-leaning National Party, currently led by President Juan Orlando Hernández, now finishing his second term under a cloud of suspicion over potential links to narco traffickers.

The candidates seeking to replace him include National Party favorite and current Tegucigalpa Mayor Nasry Asfura, or “Papi” as he is known, and the Libre Party's Xiomara Castro, wife to ousted former president Zelaya, who has promised to curb the excesses of the free market policies embraced by her opponent while forging closer ties to China.

Violence, corruption, and poverty, meanwhile, remain endemic features to life here. According to the World Bank, as of 2019, 15% of Hondurans live on less than \$2 per day,

conditions likely worsened by Covid 19 and the impact of hurricanes Eta and Iota last year, with projections of more than half the country falling below the poverty line in 2020.

Such conditions are fueling an exodus of migrants from the country, with data from this year showing 168,546 separate reports of Hondurans detained by immigration officials in the United States and Mexico, according to a June report from the Migration Policy Institute. The report noted 1-in-5 Hondurans express a desire to leave the country, with reasons ranging from food insecurity to fear of assault and unemployment.

For some in the capital the coming elections offer little hope for improvement.

“Nothing is going to change,” says Victor Manuel Mayorga, a public employee who says he has not been able to retire because the government has stolen the state's pension funds. At 79, Mayorga is part of a tiny minority of senior citizens in a country where the median age is just 24 years old.

Sitting in the city's central plaza talking soccer with friends, he bemoans the lack of education and health care, and accuses officials of all political stripes of abandoning the country. “I believe in democracy, but in Honduras it is broken. It's been broken since the coup.”

Still, not everyone is as despairing.

Cesar Nahun Aquino, 44, is an auto mechanic from the town of Yoritos, about 200 km north of Tegucigalpa. The town made headlines two years ago when residents successfully banded together to eject a mining company that had attempted to set up operations in the region.

A member of the Tolupeán indigenous community, he ran a transportation company in San Pedro Sula before the Covid 19 pandemic, which he says eviscerated his business. Now he is back in his hometown, a largely agricultural region known for coffee, avocados, and cattle ranching.

“We're asking for the basics, to get rid of corrupt elections, transparency, to reactivate the local economy so that it benefits people in the community,” says Aquino, a supporter of local mayoral candidate Freddy Murio, a formerly undocumented migrant who spent 12 years working construction in New York before returning to his hometown two years ago. “We have to start with our municipality before we can begin to change the country.”

Back in the capital, officials acknowledge no single election will solve the challenges confronting Honduras. But they stress protecting the integrity of the vote and securing the democratic process in November are key to repairing the ongoing damage caused by the coup in 2009.

“The only opportunity for the country to build a democratic foundation is through the coming elections,” says Rixi Moncada, a lawyer and part of a three-person rotating chair with the newly created National Electoral Council, or CNE as it's known by its Spanish acronym.

The CNE, responsible for delivering the final vote tally once the polls close, was created following widespread irregularities and violence that marked elections in 2017. Along with the National Registry of Persons and the Clean Politics Unit — tasked with monitoring campaign finance in a nation where drug money and politics are inextricably intertwined — these three institutions are responsible for ensuring election integrity.

Moncada, a former member of the Zelaya administration, admits it is no easy task.

“No one is prepared for the criminality,” she says, referring to the ongoing political violence that she sees as an extension of the 2009 coup, including the recent murder of mayoral candidate and member of the opposition Libre Party, Nery Reyes, who was killed earlier this month. No one has been arrested yet in his murder. “We are prepared for the process.”

TEGUCIGALPA — Un adolescente está sentado de cuclillas al lado de la entrada de un edificio, su cara manchada de lágrimas mirando perdidamente más allá de la cinta policial extendida a través de la intersección. Adentro, un grupo de hondureños indígenas están reunidos. Han viajado a la capital para denunciar lo que dicen es el robo continuo de sus tierras ancestrales por parte del gobierno.

“Perdón por todo esto”, comenta el guardia de seguridad, al indicar la escena a su alrededor. “Esto es Honduras”.

El 28 de noviembre, los hondureños emitirán su voto para elegir al próximo presidente del país centroamericano. Las elecciones vienen en medio de una sombría ola de violencia y condiciones socio económicas que se sitúan, junto con Haití, entre las peores del hemisferio occidental. Para muchos, Honduras merece el estatus de estado fallido, y aún así hay aquí quienes dicen que las próximas elecciones ofrecen la mejor – y posiblemente la última – oportunidad para cambiar las cosas.

“Estas elecciones presentan una oportunidad para recuperar el proceso democrático y enfrentar las múltiples crisis que afectan al país”, dice Gustavo Irias, director ejecutivo de CESPAD, una organización sin ánimo de lucro que aboga en nombre de las comunidades marginadas de Honduras. “Esta es una oportunidad para que Honduras recupere su sentido como nación”.

Ese sentido de condición de nación se rompió en 2009 cuando las fuerzas armadas hondureñas expulsaron al antiguo presidente Manuel Zelaya en una maniobra en la que se piensa que Estados Unidos tuvo un papel más que pasivo. Desde entonces, Honduras ha permanecido bajo el control del Partido Nacional, con inclinación hacia la derecha, actualmente dirigido por el Presidente Juan Orlando Hernández, que está acabando ahora su segundo cuatrienio bajo una nube de sospechas sobre posibles vínculos con narcotraficantes.

Los candidatos que buscan sustituirlo incluyen al alcalde actual de Tegucigalpa y el favorito del Partido Nacional, Nasry Asfura, o “Papi” como lo conocen, y la esposa del derrocado antiguo presidente Zelaya, Xiomara Castro del Partido Libre, que prometió contener los excesos de las políticas del mercado libre adoptadas por su oponente mientras estrecha lazos con China.

Mientras tanto, la violencia, la corrupción y la pobreza siguen siendo características endémicas a la vida aquí. Según el Banco Mundial, desde 2019, el 15% de los hondureños vive con menos de \$2 por día, condiciones que seguramente empeoraron a causa de la COVID-19 y el impacto de los huracanes Eta y Iota el año pasado, con predicciones de que más de la mitad del país cayó por debajo del umbral de la pobreza en 2020.

Tales condiciones están alimentando el éxodo de migrantes del país. Los datos de este año reflejan

168,546 informes separados de hondureños detenidos por funcionarios de inmigración en los Estados Unidos y México, según un informe de junio del Instituto de Política de la Migración. El informe establecía que uno de cada cinco hondureños expresa el deseo de irse del país, con razones que van desde la inestabilidad alimentaria al temor al asalto y el desempleo.

Para algunos en la capital las próximas elecciones ofrecen poca esperanza para una mejora.

“Nada va a cambiar”, dice Victor Manuel Mayorga, empleado público que dice que no ha podido jubilarse porque el gobierno ha robado los fondos de pensión del estado. A los 79 años, Mayorga es parte de una minoría diminuta de personas mayores en un país en el que la edad media es de tan solo 24 años.

Sentado en la plaza central de la ciudad hablando con amigos sobre el fútbol, se queja de la falta de educación y atención médica, y culpa a los funcionarios de todos los colores políticos de haber abandonado al país. “Creo en la democracia, pero en Honduras está rota. Ha estado rota desde el golpe”.

Aún así, no todo el mundo está tan desesperado.

Cesar Nahun Aquino, de 44 años, es mecánico de autos del pueblo de Yoritos, a unos 200 km al norte de Tegucigalpa. El pueblo fue noticia hace dos años cuando los vecinos se unieron con éxito para expulsar a una compañía de explotación minera que había intentado establecer operaciones en la región.

Miembro de la comunidad indígena de Tolupán, llevaba una compañía de transporte en San Pedro Sula antes de la pandemia de la COVID-19, la cual, dice, destripó su negocio. Ahora está de vuelta en su pueblo natal, una región predominantemente agrícola conocida por el café, el aguacate y la ganadería.

“Estamos pidiendo lo básico, la eliminación de las elecciones corruptas, la transparencia, la reactivación de la economía local para que beneficie a las personas de la comunidad”, dice Aquino, partidario del candidato a alcalde local, Freddy Murio, un antiguo migrante sin papeles que pasó 12 años trabajando en la construcción en Nueva York antes de volver a su pueblo natal hace dos años. “Tenemos que comenzar con nuestro municipio antes de que podamos comenzar a hacer cambios en el país”.

De vuelta en la capital, los funcionarios reconocen que ninguna elección resolverá los desafíos que enfrenta Honduras. Pero insisten que proteger la integridad del voto y asegurar el proceso democrático en noviembre son clave para la reparación del daño continuo causado

por el golpe de 2009.

“La única oportunidad para que el país construya una base democrática es a través de las próximas elecciones”, dice Rixi Moncada, abogada y parte de la presidencia rotativa de tres personas en el recién creado Concejo Nacional Electoral (CNE).

El CNE, que es responsable de entregar el recuento final de votos una vez que cierren las casillas, fue creado después de las extendidas irregularidades y violencia que marcaron las elecciones de 2017. Junto con el Registro Nacional de las Personas y la Unidad de Política Limpia – encargados de controlar las finanzas de campaña en un país en el que el dinero de la droga y la política están inextricablemente entrelazados – estas tres instituciones son responsables de asegurar la integridad electoral.

Moncada, antigua diputada del gobierno de Zelaya, admite que no es tarea fácil.

“Nadie está preparado para la criminalidad”, dice, refiriéndose a la violencia política continua que ve como una extensión del golpe de 2009, incluyendo el asesinato reciente del candidato a alcalde y miembro del Partido Libre de la oposición, Nery Reyes, que fue asesinado este mes. Aún no se ha detenido a nadie en conexión con su asesinato. “Estamos preparados para el proceso”.

Caption 1: El pueblo de Yorito, a unos 200 km al norte de la capital hondureña, Tegucigalpa. Hace dos años los vecinos expulsaron a una compañía de explotación minera. Muchos aquí ven las próximas elecciones como una oportunidad para cambiar el curso de su comunidad y el país.

Caption 2: Victor Mayorga, 79 años, vecino de Tegucigalpa, dice que no votará en las próximas elecciones. “Creo en la democracia, pero en Honduras está rota. Ha estado rota desde el golpe [de 2009]”.

Caption 3: Rixi Moncada es abogada y parte de la presidencia rotativa de tres personas en el recién creado Concejo Nacional Electoral (CNE), que es responsable de entregar el recuento final de los votos. “La única oportunidad para que el país construya una base democrática es a través de las próximas elecciones”.



Vacunar a los niños puede ayudar a ganar la batalla contra la COVID, argumentan expertos

Por: Jenny Manrique, Ethnic Media Services

Casi un millón de niños de 5 a 11 años han sido vacunados en Estados Unidos desde que fue aprobada la vacuna Pfizer-BioNTech para este grupo etario el pasado 20 de septiembre. Los esfuerzos por inmunizar a 28 millones de infantes en estas edades, podrían significar un punto de inflexión en la batalla para contener la pandemia de COVID-19, pero muchos padres aún se encuentran reacios a vacunar a sus hijos.

“Recibimos llamadas telefónicas, correos electrónicos y mensajes de texto de familias que esperaban ansiosamente la vacuna para sus hijos”, dijo Jennifer Miller, pediatra de East Bay Pediatrics durante un panel convocado por Ethnic Media Services el 12 de noviembre. “Pero también tenemos otro grupo de pacientes que ha sido más cauteloso y vacilante”.

El primer grupo, dijo Miller, espera poder retomar algo parecido a la normalidad sin tener que preocuparse por aislar o tener en cuarentena a sus niños: poder enviarlos de nuevo a la escuela e ir de vacaciones juntos en familia.

Los segundos, que pertenecen en su mayoría a comunidades étnicas, tienen miedo de vacunar a sus hijos por desconocer las consecuencias a largo plazo, o porque han oído que causa efectos secundarios como la infertilidad (desmentido por los científicos) o la miocarditis (inflamación en el corazón que se ha presentado de manera excepcional en hombres después de la segunda dosis y que es muy fácil de tratar.)

Aunque muchos han aceptado vacunarse, en cuanto a sus hijos prefieren ver y esperar pues sienten que sobre ellos recae el peso de una decisión que los infantes son muy jóvenes para tomar.

La Dra. Miller citó los impactos en la salud mental que está viendo entre sus pacientes jóvenes como otra razón

para asegurarse de que reciban las vacunas.

“No solo estamos lidiando con una pandemia debido a COVID, sino que estamos

lidiando con una pandemia de salud mental”, dijo ella

Los niños y adolescentes han sido alejados de su rutina escolar, sus compañeros, sus deportes y sus clubes. Están deprimidos y ansiosos porque han perdido familiares a causa de COVID, están tristes.

“Estos niños necesitan regresar a la escuela a tiempo completo”, añadió la pediatra. “Tenemos niños de kindergarten que no aprendieron a leer y niños con necesidades especiales que no recibieron sus terapias ocupacionales”. Estas disparidades educativas ocurren mucho más comúnmente en familias de ingresos bajos. “Si esas familias no salen y se vacunan, estos niños seguirán rezagados y no podrán competir con sus compañeros”.

Según los Centros para el Control y Prevención de Enfermedades (CDC en inglés), desde que comenzó la pandemia se han registrado más de 6 millones de casos de COVID positivos en niños en los Estados Unidos, que han provocado 64.000 hospitalizaciones y 650 muertes. Por eso la directora de los CDC, Rochelle Wollensky, avaló la recomendación del grupo asesor sobre prácticas de inmunización para darle paso a la vacunación masiva infantil.

“No hay duda de que los niños corren menos riesgo de contraer enfermedades graves por COVID”, dijo Monica Gandhi, profesora de la Facultad de Medicina de la



Universidad de California en San Francisco. “Pero aunque el riesgo es menor, durante el aumento de la variante Delta, COVID fue la sexta causa principal de muerte en los niños”.

Gandhi citó tres razones por las que los niños deben ser vacunados: para protegerse del virus, para reducir la transmisión especialmente a padres mayores y abuelos; y porque la dosis aprobada es segura.

Esto cobra relevancia entre las comunidades étnicas por la mayor incidencia de diabetes, presión arterial alta y colesterol alto, que las hace más vulnerables al COVID.

“Durante el ensayo clínico con 2268 niños hubo una reducción de las infecciones sintomáticas por COVID del 90,7%.”, dijo Gandhi. En razón a los raros casos de miocarditis, la Administración de Alimentos y Medicamentos (FDA en inglés) autorizó a Pfizer suministrar una dosis de 10 mg para niños de 5 a 11, en contraste con los 30 mg que reciben los adultos. En el caso de Moderna la dosis es de 100 mg.

Gandhi sugiere que habrá una mayor eficacia en niños si las dosis se administran con un intervalo entre ellas mayor a tres semanas, basada en datos del Instituto Nacional de Salud Pública en Quebec: Canadá optó por administrar las dosis con ocho semanas de diferencia y tuvo una efectividad del 92% frente al 82% de protección que dan las dosis más seguidas.

“Todavía estamos en una tasa de vacunación de alrededor del 68% en todo el país entre los mayores de 12 años”, dijo Gandhi “28 millones de

niños vacunados harán que el virus encuentren cada vez menos huéspedes susceptibles”.

Desinformación y miedos

Maria Meraz, fundadora y directora de Parent Engagement Academy, trabaja anualmente con alrededor de 3000 padres en los condados de Los Ángeles y Ventura, 90% de ellos inmigrantes y latinos de primera generación. Dijo que allí la desinformación que circula sobre la vacuna en redes como WhatsApp, Facebook, y Youtube es “terrible”.

“Las familias son de bajos ingresos y muchas de ellas no tienen acceso a la televisión por cable... obtienen su información de fuentes que no son las mejores como amigos y familiares”. Meraz trabaja con varios distritos escolares que brindan servicios de ayuda socioemocional para orientar a los padres en un dilema que les causa mucha ansiedad: si bien muchos no están de acuerdo con la vacunación, saben que no tienen otra opción.

“Tienen que enviar a sus hijos a la escuela porque tienen que ir a trabajar”, aseguró.

Madison Sandoval, una enfermera escolar del Área de la Bahía, citó un nuevo temor de que los niños que no han sido vacunados puedan terminar convirtiéndose en blanco de acoso cibernético.

Ahora no obstante hay un nuevo miedo pues los padres han visto mucho acoso cibernético e intimidación contra familias que no creen en las vacunas.

“Definitivamente puedo ver el potencial de que ocurra el acoso, y por eso creo que es realmente importante que las escuelas adelanten ese tipo de

diálogo y se enfoquen realmente en el beneficio de las vacunas, sin culpar o avergonzar a ningún niño porque, en última instancia, no es su decisión” sostuvo Sandoval.

Sandoval recordó que el enmascaramiento y la ventilación son medidas realmente efectivas para prevenir la propagación del COVID al interior de las escuelas y que mientras las vacunas no sean obligatorias para asistir a las aulas, hay que seguir con ellas.



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A Blue Texas (Mi Opinion)

By A. Govea

For years now there has been talk about Texas turning blue or at least purple. If we just have the right person on the top of the ticket. If we can just register more folks and get out the vote. If we can finally fully mobilize the Latino community. And other stuff has been written, said, predicated and said, Pero it has not happened yet.

In the 2020 presidential race between Biden and the hated Trump (but not all) Biden got 46. % and change, Trump got 52.1%. Nothing different from the last presidential elections. Jimmy Carter was the last Democrat to carry Texas. And at 97 we can't count on him to bring back a win for the Dems. The Dems have always believed if turnout increases, Dems will win. Well, it did by 6.6.% over the 2016 election. Pero, the result was the same, just another GOP win. Even in deep South Texas, like rural Starr County where of the 51.3% of the voters 47% voted for Trump.

That result and other similar results in other rural counties in the South made some peoples' head explode. After all, those areas are almost entirely Latino. So how could they vote for Trump? The Texas monthly October issue carried a story titled, "Why Democrats are losing Tejanos" the article asks, "What if many Hispanic Texans consider themselves White and vote that way?" It is a good article and if

you get a chance, it's worth the read.

Pero, (but) I will say that many Mexican types do struggle with choosing a label like Hispanic, Latino, Tejano and new to the show Latinx. Just White is not a common choice, maybe some especially those that have served in the military. May say I am American period. And they would be right for them. Me: I am just a leftover Chicano. I (opinion) do not believe any label you chose for yourself plays much into your vote. However, the saying, "All polices are local" enters the picture in the way the Raza (yet another choice) votes in South Texas.

In South Texas the oil business is king, and the Border patrol is also a big employer. Add to the fact that as much as you feel compassion for the folks that come here legally or not. When strangers are repeatedly coming through your property, it is going to rub you the wrong way. Ca No, I mean, if you are honest. It does not mean you are a bad person, it just means you want it to stop. It's not personal, you can still feel compassion for their struggle.

So, what does the democratic party do then since they seem to concede most rural counties and now threw in South Texas too? As big as Dallas, Harris and Baxter counties are, there only some many votes you can mine out of those counties. That said, the Dems cannot afford to write off South Texas and their huge Latino voter base. What they must do is realize that one size fits all messaging does not work with all Latinos. Just because you turn some of the English Ads into Spanish does not equal to

mission accomplished with Latino community. And since I am on the subject, not all Raza Speak or read Spanish. In fact, some folks are insulted if you only try to communicate with them in Spanish.

Spend some time in those counties and talk to people and not just the same Democratic chair or the usual suspects. Talk to some of the new Democratic alliances that have formed in some of those rural counties. Find out what their needs are and maybe a few wants. And does this in all rural counties not just South Texas believe there are some Dems out there? You just must spend the time and financial resources to find. And make sure some of the money from the Build Back Bill is spent there and they know it was the Dems that made it happen. Especially since Republicans are already trying to take credit for the investment they voted against.

I certainly do not have all the answers, Pero (but) I know that mistakes have been made in messaging and it must improve. Because believe me, the Republican donor money for Abbott and his cronies is already pouring along with the spin machine. And even though I disagree with most Republican polices, their messages always seem to work better than what the Dems put out. So, can Texas turn blue? Yes, and once they do, given the new demos, it may stay that way. Pero it won't happen by just wishing it would. I truly believe that the opportunity is there, but as the saying goes, "It comes dressed in work clothes.



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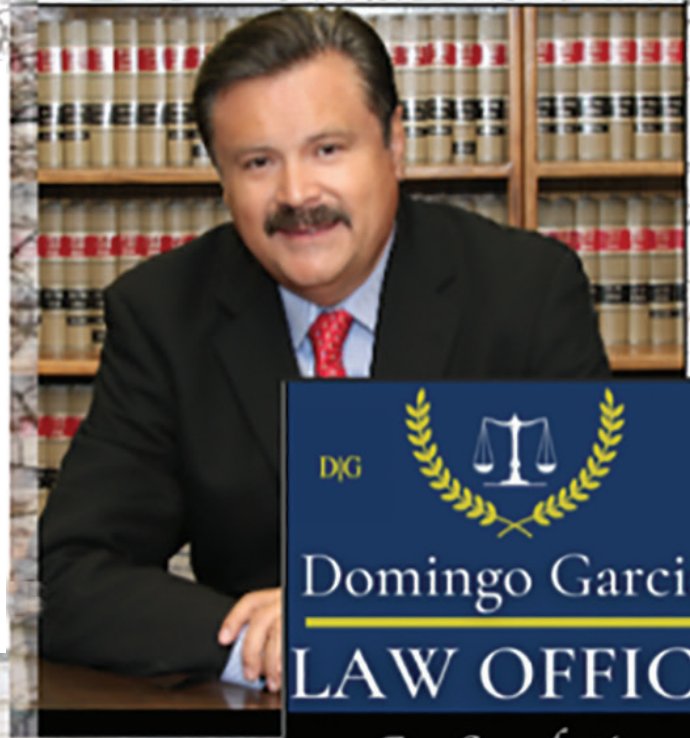
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