

OUR VOICE

Mexico-U.S. bilateral relations do not seem to be normalizing as they need to. The distancing of the two presidents and the apparent gap on common issues that this distancing shows has and will continue to have long-term negative implications for the many items pending on the two nations' agenda. The first and most important is the regularization of the situation of undocumented Mexican workers in the United States, and signing a migratory agreement that would make it possible to foresee these kinds of recurring difficulties that could become obstacles to negotiating other issues of the highest national interest for both parties.

The United States is making a grave mistake when it supposes that Mexican immigration is a security problem. And Mexico also makes a mistake if it assumes that the migration negotiations should favor it without being willing to offer something in exchange. Actually, however, today in the United States, the Latino population in general and the Mexican population in particular represent a sociological and political phenomenon of major importance. The more than five million Mexicans with irregular migratory status presuppose another fact of utmost significance: cash remittances (which come to more than U.S.\$10 billion annually) are about to become the fundamental component of Mexican national income, surpassing oil, the maquila industry and tourism. If we add the fact that the growth rate of the Mexican-origin population in the United States is extremely high and has even surpassed that of Afro-Americans, Asians and other Latinos, we have a budding process of exponential growth of Mexicans that is impossible to ignore in either country.

In the United States the political establishment is already highly sensitive to the growing importance of the Mexican population. In Mexico, on the other hand, there does not seem to be agreement about the implementation of a consistent long-term strategy to approach that population. It should be emphasized, however, that in the last three years our government has shown willingness to create some kind of link with the Mexican community in the U.S. that would help to eliminate possible differences and support it in the defense of its rights, frequently violated both by employers and other social and political actors. Washington has an unavoidable obligation: forcefully assuming the same respect for human rights at home that it demands of other countries. No justification for not upholding this principle is acceptable, whether invoking the irregular status of millions of Mexican immigrants, or the principle of national security that the United States has reinforced particularly since 9/11 and has imposed today both unilaterally and arbitrarily on the rest of the world's countries. What is more, the application of this principle to justify the delay in negotiating a migratory agreement negates precisely what it strives to affirm: the irregular status of any citizen in any country is, in and of itself, a high risk for that state and that society since it makes it impossible to locate the resident in question. In reality, the solution lies in taking the opposite tack. Recognizing the problem (the existence of an important number of Mexicans without proper legal status) is probably the only possibility of finding a viable solution: offering them the opportunity of residency with dignity and a work environment consistent with the most cherished principles of U.S. democracy.

The issue of the different dynamics of the Mexican-origin population in the United States (demographic, economic, social, political and cultural) has taken on unprecedented relevance in recent years. Its importance is undoubtedly one of the definitive matters in the bilateral relationship for the new century, as well as for the future of regional economic integration. This is the reason why *Voices of Mexico* has called upon specialists from both sides of the border to reflect about the future of the Latino population —especially

that of Mexican origin— in the United States. In this and the next issue of our magazine, we will publish interviews, essays and articles about the main problems that affect our compatriots and the Hispanic population in general on the other side of the border. In the current issue, we begin our “Politics” section with an interview with Cándido Morales, the man in charge of relations with and matters pertaining to our compatriots in the United States. Morales explains the main programs and policies designed in recent years to facilitate relations with the Mexican diaspora in the United States that include a broad gamut of activities and concerns in the fields of the economy, politics, culture, the protection of migrants’ human rights, legal aid, labor support and bilingual education, among others. He also describes the structure and functions of the recently created Institute of Mexicans Abroad, which has a broad Advisory Council made up, among others, of more than 100 persons of Mexican origin residing in the United States. The section continues with an article by César Pérez Espinosa about the Hispanic caucus in the U.S. House of Representatives, which in his opinion has functioned in a very limited fashion within the rules imposed by the bi-partisan system, with scant real impact in favor of Latinos as a national ethnic minority. The section also includes two articles about burning issues for Mexican politics today. On the one hand, independent Deputy José Buendía and legislative specialist Marco A. Morales have contributed an article about the new Law of Transparency and Access to Public Information, which the two authors co-designed in its local version for Mexico City. This law establishes for the first time the mechanisms and procedures for the public to have access to government information previously denied to it despite the fact that the right to information was established in the Constitution. The new law also stipulates the criteria the authorities will use to classify certain information for reasons of national security, public safety or respect for personal privacy. Analyst Ricardo Raphael de la Madrid has contributed a balance sheet on Mexico’s outgoing Fifty-Eighth Congress, which he considers one of the most productive in history, despite the general impression of its supposed stagnation and inability to process the most important legal reforms the country requires to consolidate its democracy. The author situates that inability, rather, in President Vicente Fox’s administration, which has not understood Mexico’s new pluralism, and therefore repeats the vices and behavior of the presidentialism that it previously criticized.

Our “History” section brings our readers a contribution from well-known Mexican writer Vicente Quiarte, who reviews the literature about New York produced by nineteenth-century Mexican travelers, among them renowned politicians and writers.

Mexican specialist Esperanza García contributes an article to our “Society” section about the Chicano movement and its struggles, not only for social justice, civil rights and non-discrimination, but to define an identity that would bring it closer to but at the same time distinguish it from its origins and its present. To do this, her analysis moves through the proposals of the main exponents of Chicano thought of the last four decades. In this section, we also present a vision of what could be called “neo-Chicano-ism” written by one of the most important contemporary representatives of that movement, Guillermo Gómez-Peña. Beyond the search for his own identity, he also reflects on the conditions imposed on Mexican Americans by new circumstances like September 11, regional integration, the emergence of democracy in Mexico and U.S. neo-conservatism and its unilateralist international policy.

Our “United States Affairs” section begins with a sweeping contribution from Mexican-American academic Arturo Madrid, who presents a critical review of the history of Chicano studies and the struggle to win for them a place as an academic discipline in U.S. universities. Elaine Levine, for her part, reflects on the important issue of continuing and even increasing segregation —sometimes hidden and sometimes totally open— of the Mexican-origin population in the United States. This segregation has confined Mexicans to barrios, ghettos in which they reproduce their culture of origin without a positive integration into the social reality of the host nation as a whole. Mario Melgar Adalid writes about the important issue of migration and its impact on bilateral relations. He shows how neither the North American Free Trade Agreement, nor the events of September 11, nor economic globalization and regional integration have reduced the flow of migrants, but rather, to the contrary, have contributed to increasing it because of the rising poverty in developing countries caused precisely by these phenomena. Another Mexican-American academic, Jaime Chahín, presents

the results of his research on Latinos and education in the U.S., showing how, while in some southwestern states the majority of students are of Latino origin, there are big gaps in the quality of education received by different ethnic groups. As a consequence Latinos tend to enroll much more in trade schools and community colleges than in universities and professional schools. This section concludes with an article by Graciela Orozco that shows a very complete panorama of not-for-profit Latino organizations in the United States. Orozco describes how, despite the fact that in recent years there has been a veritable explosion of new Latino organizations, they are increasingly confronting problems in getting funding both from government and large U.S. foundations, the majority of which still have discriminatory practices with honorable exceptions like the Ford Foundation.

The “Art and Culture” section is dedicated to Mexican-origin artists in the United States whose themes may be considered universal. Lucy Lippard has presented us with an intuitive essay about the motivations and complete career of photographer Kathy Vargas, a San Antonio resident. Her images have multiple meanings, always related to the transcendental forces that mold our life experiences, among them love and death. For his part, Xavier Quirarte looks at the acid, transborder work of La Pocha Nostra, a forum for artists of different generations, disciplines and ethnic origins. Founded by Guillermo Gómez-Peña, the group explores, among others, issues like migration, the politics of language and the hybrid, intercultural identities that help go beyond political borders between countries.

This issue’s “The Splendor of Mexico” section examines the cultural past of the State of Mexico, which formed part of the Mesoamerican highlands. María del Carmen Carbajal writes about four of the 17 archaeological sites that have been excavated in the state, which are representative of the cultural, economic and geo-political pre-Columbian development reached by the region. For their part, Gustavo Ramírez and Carlos Madrigal take us to mystical Malinalco, telling us about its pre-Hispanic and colonial past, visible in its ceremonial and civic architecture. Lastly, in Mexico, the rites of the Catholic faith are undeniably linked to the world of the gods that dominated these lands before the arrival of the Spanish, as can be seen in the fervent worship of the Holy Lord of Chalma, whose sanctuary is the second most visited in the country.

The National Museum of the Viceroyalty, in the beautiful city of Tepotzotlán, graces our “Museums” section, not only because it has one of the country’s richest and most splendid collections of viceregal art, but also because of the context in which they are exhibited: the former Jesuit San Francisco Javier College.

“Ecology” describes one of the most ambitious environment protection projects of the State of Mexico and the country as a whole carried out in recent years: the restoration of the waters of what was once Texcoco Lake. Engineer Gerardo Cruickshank, director of the project, describes its importance for ecological recovery and the area’s sustainable economic development.

Continuing our review of new Chicano literature, Bruce Novoa has written an essay about the poetry of Rita Maria Magdaleno, whose first book introduces us to a collection of poems that renew the concepts of the search for origins and identity, turning it into a fresh surprising literary proposal. Naturally, we also present our readers with a brief selection of Magdaleno’s poetry.

José Luis Valdés-Ugalde