

In the Hispanic News

An encounter with NotiHispano

by Denos P. Marvin

A short while ago my wife and I lunched at a Mexican restaurant in Galax, Virginia. Since we are both fluent in Spanish we each were motivated to pick up a free copy of a Spanish-language newspaper from a stack that was handily located at the cashier's station. The newspaper, *NotiHispano*, seems overall to have a very acceptable Hispanic bias, chiefly the preservation of the Hispanic heritage and language by migrants and their American-born children.

For the most part I found the reports and editorials to be the kinds of things that one would expect to find in a periodical of this nature. Hence the emphasis on immigration problem-solving, i.e., the legal right of all migrants to a professional interpreter; how to obtain, while in the U.S.A., an official Mexican ID (the *Matricula Consular*); and all about the favorable recognition the *Matricula* ID card is receiving from important institutions such as banks, Blue Cross, and the U.S. Department of Treasury. Another article advises readers that no public agency in the City of New York may inquire as to your immigration status.

The examples of public agencies given in the report were "police, schools, hospitals, etc." Listed among the "etc.," I am sure, would be all manner of governmental social service agencies that do and should bestow tax payer-paid services to the needy, regardless of their legal status in this country. I also found of interest a short blurb about the school district of Galax, Virginia, now offering a Spanish-language version of the GED, a high school equivalency exam. On another page was an info-report that told how to get a CD-ROM that tells how to obtain higher education scholarships. Information about the cost-free CD is available on a website sponsored jointly by the National Education Association (NEA) and the "National Hispanic Press Foundation" (NHPF). Certainly

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Noti puts a commendable emphasis on achieving an education.

Personally, if I were one of the ten million Spanish-speaking immigrants in the United States, I would find *NotiHispano* and similar Spanish language publications to be very helpful, especially if I were an illegal immigrant, living in fear of *la Migra* and of being returned to a life of high unemployment and abject poverty in Mexico. However, not being one of the ten million, but rather a native of this country, I did find a few aspects of this otherwise innocuous publication with its Spanish *gemutlich* to be somewhat disquieting.

For example, there was the somewhat peevish front-page lament that many California Hispanics had voted for Arnold Schwarzenegger instead of voting as a bloc for Lieutenant-Governor Cruz Bustamente, one of their very own – "*el candidato que representa a nuestras raices.*" – an indication, it seems to me, of the apartheid aims of the reporters and publishers.

Further, in the report about the GED there was no concern about the apparent linguistic "dumbing down" of the GED and the effect this would have on related educational issues. Is not literacy in English and proficiency in thinking and writing in English the cornerstone of the GED examination and certificate? If so, minus the critical factor of English proficiency, the matter raises the question: to what extent has a Spanish-speaking student, with this kind of certification, really demonstrated that he has achieved the equivalent of an American high school education? In other words, when not conducted in English and thereby removed from the American cultural context, the exam can hardly reflect educational equivalence.

Above all, what I found to be particularly lacking throughout the twelve pages of this letter-perfect publication (these are no amateur writers here) was that nowhere in the newspaper were there any positive statements about the value of learning and assimilating the language, culture, and heritage of the United States. Hopefully these are topics that will be written about in future editions of *NotiHispano*. •