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ASK A MEXICAN!

BY GUSTAVO ARELLANO

Dear Mexican: What's the deal with Spanish-language car dealership commercials that feature bikini-clad porn star-wannabes copulating with used cars? I just saw one where three girls were rubbing melted chocolate on each other. Surely, no one in mainstream Caucasian America could get away with such overtly sexual, misogynistic advertising. Does this type of ad actually convince people to buy cars? - Not Buying a Used Sentra with Boob Prints all Over It



Dear Alien: You didn't specify where you're from, so I'll assume eres from another dimension because no gabacho would ever send in the above question. From Betty Boop's race-car driver in Ker Choo to Paris Hilton recording a burger-chain commercial a couple of years ago that saw the heiress washing a carro, Americans have insisted that girls accompany their grilles—and Mexicans are no different. Freudians can debate the whys, but Mexicans only care about the whos (chicas calientes), whats (appearing in car commercials), whens (during weekend mornings), wheres (on your local Spanish-language channel), and hows (vigorously). If you only take one thing from Earth, Sentra, it's that sexo sells in all languages. Oh, and that Guatemalans can't spell.

Each sentence from the following pregunta is an excerpt from the multiple questions in the Mexican's archive that address the same topic.

Having been called a gabacho, I couldn't help being interested in the etymological root of that word. I'm never sure what the reference is with the term gabacho, since in my Spanish dictionary (Bantam New College Revised from 1987), gabacho means "Pyrenean" (someone from the Pyrenees, the mountains between France and Spain), "Frenchy," or "Frenchified Spanish." My question is which came first: the Spanish "gabacho" for the French, or the Mexican "gabacho" for the gringo? Does this go way back to those French vatos that got their trousers kicked on Cinco de Mayo in Puebla? Ramen is yummy.

Dear Readers: Few features of this column are more controversial than the Mexican's preference for gabacho instead of gringo to describe gabachos. Technically, gabacho refers to an inhabitant of the Pyrenees, but it became a Spanish slur for a Frenchman over the centuries. The Royal Academy of Spanish states gabacho originated from the Provençal word gavach, which means "bad-speaking." (Quick note for amateur etymologists: don't believe the 2000 collection Chicano Folklore: A Guide to the Folktales, Traditions, Rituals and Religious Practices of Mexican Americans, which states gabacho comes from an arcane Castilian term meaning "a current of water," or the NTC's Dictionary of Mexican Cultural Code Words edition claiming, "When Mexican men noted that foreign men often helped their wives in the kitchen, something a Mexican male wouldn't dream of doing, they began calling such men gabachos or 'aprons.'") When the French briefly conquered Mexico during the 1860s, the Mexicans correctly ridiculed the occupying army as gabachos; after los franceses left, the term remained, and Mexicans applied it to their perpetual European antagonists: Americans. Nevertheless, many Mexicans grumble that I should call gabachos gringos since it's the more accurate term for gabachos (funnily, none ever ask I stop slurring our pasty amigos). So why does this Mexican use gabacho? Besides growing up with the word, it allows Mexicans to smuggle two ethnic slurs in uno handy word—not only are we calling gabachos gringos, but we're also calling them French. Parlez-vous double insult, cabrones?

CONFIDENTIAL TO: The state of Oklahoma, which recently enacted one of the harshest anti-immigrant laws in the country. Don't give Mexicans mierda about H.B. 1804 being anti-ILLEGAL immigration—your Sooner ancestors and Okie grandparents sure as hell didn't make such distinctions when invading the Unassigned Lands and California, respectively. May a Dust Bowl of pedos afflict your slack-jawed state. ¡Viva Tom Osborne!

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