

say, "It's funny, but if you're trying to upset me, it's not going to work." I'm beyond that, and I want other people to get beyond it too.

Also, can you talk to me about the statement I've seen directed at you from other Latinos that you're "not really Mexican" or "not really one of us"?

Number one, I find it hilarious when people try to ascribe very limited attributes to particular ethnicity. People say you're born in the U.S., so you're not a Mexican. Try telling that to the hundreds of thousands of us, the high school kids like me who grew up in the U.S. and describe ourselves as Mexican. Who are you to say these kids aren't Mexican?

If you use limiting labels like that, you're no better than the racists who say somebody who doesn't speak the language but works hard is no better than an illegal savage. I find that reprehensible.

Number two, if you want to play the game of qualifications, I can play that: Both of my parents were Mexican immigrants. My mom was first a strawberry picker and then a tomato canner, and my dad is a truck driver. The only language spoken in my household is Spanish. But I got university degrees.

One thing about immigration from Mexico is that entire communities uproot and transplant themselves in United States. My mom's *rancho*, there were 500 people in her *rancho* at its most populous. Now there are over a thousand people from her *rancho* in the U.S. When I grew up, all my friends, all my girlfriends, everybody I knew — they weren't even Mexicans, they were people from this small village in Mexico.

I know that in Orange County and some of the other places where the column runs, it has sparked a lot of controversy. Did you expect that?

Absolutely. When the column started [as a one-time joke] in November of 2004 — well, whenever you write a story about immigration in Orange County, you get a ton of responses. So we knew people were going to go nuts. And to run the logo, yeah, people are going to go even more nuts.

We didn't expect people to start sending in questions about Mexicans, to call me on my bluff. And every place that the column has run, I've experienced the exact same reaction as in Eugene. Even in El Paso, which is like 95 percent Mexican, there was controversy



Arellano with his family

with the column as well. I know how the reaction goes: Hate, puzzlement, calls and letters to the newspaper, meetings with the editors, and then eventually, people settle down and start reading the column. And more often than not, I'm able to convert those people into being fans of the column. I expect that to also happen in Eugene.

If you have a concern with the column, email me (themexican@askamexican.net). I'll talk to you. I'm not just going to be writing columns from some ivory tower and sending them to the masses. The purpose of the column is to spark dialogue among people.

I hear from many people that they think the column is racist. And as you know, a member of the human rights community here has written that your success "is based upon purposely

exploiting the dominant culture's racial cruel streak."

It's not. First and foremost, there are no sacred cows. If I view pathologies in the Mexican community, I'm speaking out against those as well. There's an unfortunate streak of homophobia, for instance, and I've spoken against machismo, spoken against racism. I have spoken against Mexicans discriminating against darker-skinned Mexicans.

I'm not degrading anyone; I'm criticizing my own *gente*, my own people. If we're going to portray ourselves as the people who deserve amnesty, we have some issues to work out. But the vast majority of my critiques are against people who are know-nothings — those are the people I'm going after. If people read the column continuously, they'll see me go after that.

The column, it's really multifaceted. It's combating hate, providing a forum for people to learn about Mexicans and attempting to

really destroy the Mexican of the American imagination. We're not all rapist-criminals, but we're also not all saints. We're humans like everybody else. We have the good, the bad, the goofy, and I want to talk about all of that.

Other people tell me they know what you're trying to do, but they think you're furthering racial stereotypes. They are especially concerned about the toilet paper column that ran in EW on Nov. 8. How do you respond to the accusation that you're only reinforcing stereotypes?

OK, first of all, [not flushing toilet paper] IS something that happens in Mexico. Also, it's a question I get a lot. I think they didn't read it the whole way through. With that last sentence ["Do me a favor, gabacho, and tell nopaleros that here in los Estados Unidos, we're much more sophisticated with our No. 2 — we flush it into the ocean."], I'm criticizing the people who send in the question. I'm criticizing *our* unsanitary ways.

I don't ridicule Mexicans. I play along with stereotypes only to be able to explode them. People have to read the whole column in order to understand what's going on.

For instance, to the question, "Why do Mexicans steal?" I gave three answers. But at the end, I said, "If my answers seem evasive, it's because they are — because your question is so stupid, I'll only give you the stupidest answer possible."

Many of the other papers where your column runs (Kansas City, Orange County, New York) are located in cities with historically large Latino populations. People in Eugene are giving EW two forms of feedback. One is that Eugene isn't sophisticated enough for your humor.

OK, one: I just came back from Jackson, Wyo., population 10,000. I had a standing-room only audience. A lot of Mexican immigrants came up to me and said, "Thank you for writing this column. We laugh at it, but we're proud that you're willing to be a voice against hate against Mexicans." The column can and does play in small town America.

People are trying to portray Eugene as this innocent bubble — oh, we can't allow the reality of the U.S. to come in. In reading some of those emails, I find them patronizing on both sides. On one side, they are patronizing "poor" Mexican immigrants. Others are say-

If you have a concern with the column, email me (themexican@askamexican.net). I'll talk to you. I'm not just going to be writing columns from some ivory tower.

Ho! Ho! Ho! You Really Gotta Go!

SWEET POTATO PIE

Finish Yo List With Fabulous Pie Gifts!

- ☆ Beanies, Hats, Gloves & Hoodies
- ☆ Scarves, Socks, Wallets & Jewelry
- ☆ GRATEFUL DEAD Goodies Galore
- ☆ Hemp, Organic Cotton & Bamboo Clothing
- ☆ Hundreds of Local Gifts

HEMPY HOLIDAYS!
We're GRATEFUL for your support!

Mon-Sat 10-7 / Sunday 12-6
Corner of 11th & Willamette in the ♥ of Eugene

BORDER ANGELS

FEATURING ENRIQUE MORONES

THURSDAY NOV. 29, 6:00 PM
UO KNIGHT SCHOOL OF LAW ROOM 175
7:30 RECEPTION IN LEWIS LOUNGE 4TH FLOOR LAW SCHOOL
Free admission

ENRIQUE MORONES is a long time internationally acclaimed Human Rights activist; Border Angels is an all volunteer group established in 1986 which places water in the desert and blankets and food in the winter on the border areas to save migrant lives.

Morones was President of the San Diego Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; a director of the San Diego Padres; a founder/director of Mexico's Border Commission and advisory group to Mexican President Vicente Fox.

Sponsored by: Tieshly Education, ASUD Multicultural Center, MEChA, Amigos Multicultural Services, CAUSA, Ethnic Studies Program, UO Gender, Families and Immigrant Project of CSWS, UO Center for Latina & Latin American Studies. Info 346-4121/346-2983