

ASK A MEXICAN! Letters

AN INFORMED CHOICE

This isn't about whether or not the *EW* has the right to run "Ask a Mexican!," the column by Gustavo Arellano. You have that right. You also have the right to discontinue it. It's a choice among the many choices that your publication makes all the time. So I'm just asking you to make an informed choice, based on knowing that many readers, including me, and many members of our community are truly offended by it.

Yes, I know it's supposed to be funny, and maybe it's even trying to make fun of stereotypes. It doesn't work, not here anyhow. In fact, it reinforces some really ugly images of Mexicans. That's serious at a time when Latino immigrants are already scapegoats for all the ills of society. That's serious when we live in a community that remains divided along lines of race, class and national origin. That's serious when many of us in the majority culture don't know any Latinos as neighbors, co-workers or friends, and so don't have the connection with individuals that can counteract the stereotypes.

We can be open, though, and listen when Latino members of our community tell us that this column really hurts. This column really makes them feel unwelcome and unsafe. I know that the *EW* is receiving this message. I hope that the *EW* chooses to listen and to discontinue the "Ask a Mexican!" column. As an alternative, perhaps the *EW* could even offer members of the Latino community and other marginalized groups a chance to provide a column for the paper.

Marion Malcolm
Eugene

FART JOKES NEXT?

I am deeply saddened by the appearance in the *EW* of a column written by Mr. Gustavo Arellano. Such negative stereotyping of friends and neighbors, here and to the south, is more than disrespectful. His column is an example of lingering U.S. arrogance, usually expressed by a certain minority class in *los Estados Unidos*, and contributes no solution toward the immigration issue.

If Mr. Arellano wishes to publicly announce his racist views, why not allow him a letter to the editor? And will the "sophisticated" Mr. Gustavo Arellano subject *EW* readers to more cultural discussions about bodily functions of elimination and start including juvenile fart jokes?

Public displays containing this level of lack of respect usually serve two purposes — to elevate one's own self esteem by de-

grading others and to keep racist views alive. By the way, no human being is illegal.

U.S. has a long history of arrogance, fed by acts of aggression and oppression. The greater the success in oppressing, the greater the wealth, power and feelings of superiority for the oppressor.

Let us continue to break this cycle of arrogance that leads to hate and wars and which keeps us from breaking free of the trilogy that Dr. King asked us to overcome — poverty, racism and militarism.

I encourage all to dig deeper into the reasons why the U.S. has not been able to rid itself of poverty, racism and militarism. How and why are certain people kept down and continually oppressed? Who benefits?

Elaine Hayes
Springfield

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

A couple weeks ago it made my day—no, my *week* when I found "Ask A Mexican!" in the *Weekly*. No more reading Arellano on-line. The *Weekly* has beaten the rest in Oregon (and the Northwest?) to one of the most relevant educational opportunities in the U.S. today, served in a side-splittingly funny format.

Please, as Gustavo says, allow the whiners a chance to catch on — hopefully they will. I began my education in Hispanic culture in the '70s when I was getting an education degree (secondary, social science). Another student teacher I became friends with happened to be a Tejano who had moved to Portland for his high school career. He was one of the first "Mexicans" to graduate from high school in Portland. He interested me in his culture and drew my attention to the dichotomy between what I had been taught and other versions of history.

After that I lived and traveled in Latin America and learned Spanish and have since grabbed any opportunity to learn more about the rest of the Americas. With this background, I assure you all that Gustavo knows his stuff and informs us in what I think is an eminently powerful way.

He's equal opportunity; he pokes at the various Hispanic stereotypes too. I feel strongly it is important that we head off racism and other cultural misunderstandings that are building now (as Anglos are becoming a minority in California). Otherwise, our society will be ripped apart as the stresses build in our American empire. Just griping about ethnocentrism doesn't do much. Humor is more powerful.

Que vive the Mexican! Please keep Gustavo's column.

PS: If you want a very positive look at what is possible, you should have been at the McDonald for Ozomatli on Monday the 19th for a multilingual party of true hybrid vigor. (Don't worry, I think they'll be back.)

Rick Valley
Dexter

NOT EVEN FUNNY

I and other non-Mexican Latinos have a request. Please stop printing the "Ask a Mexican!" column. It is racist and full of faux humor. The redneck creators of this blatantly anti-non-Mexican column want us to believe they are looking out for Latinos and are fighting against those who abuse and exploit us. Seems as though the editors at *EW* fell for that propaganda. Anyone can read the column and see that the writer doesn't even like non-Mexican Latinos. I thought *EW* would have chosen to read every word of the column before publishing it in the paper, but I guess their guilt-ridden liberalism got in the way.

Are you people closeted racists? I imagine you wouldn't print columns written by David Duke or the KKK? How about reading the last two "Ask a Mexican!" columns that you printed and you'll see.

A message to these racists: Most Native Americans consider Mexicans to be the original illegal aliens, NOT the original immigrants to this continent. Before *EW* decides to print any new column(s), you might want to consult with various minority groups for advice, 'cause you country white folks aren't so street wise.

Juana Garcia
Eugene

TACKY PIECE OF UGLINESS

I read the first lines of "Ask a Mexican!" and felt tired. I shoved my *EW* to the side. A lot of space to dedicate for a cheap laugh at the expense of people whose work will now be a bit harder, a few more bad days for our kids, another irritant to be endured. For me, picking up the *EW* that Thursday morning meant one more comfortable ritual lost; another harsh reminder that in the eyes of yet another local group, I still don't belong. I heaved a sigh. I could hear all the smug comments — I don't have a sense of humor; I should lighten up.

Thanks to the mothers of the Latino community, I am energized to weigh in. If you truly want to "Ask a Mexican," you don't have to ask someone living in Orange County who doesn't care a dot for Eugene, just making a buck. If you truly want to ask questions — about inclusion, justice, safe schools, vigorous new businesses, celebra-

tions, events, forums, professionals, LCC, UO, community vision, design, art, immigrant rights, about style, history, ideas, about love, poetry, music, even something that makes you laugh, I've got names of movers and shakers, a full range of Latino neighbors who work hard to help make Eugene/Springfield a beloved community. I'd be happy to "namedrop with a purpose" and send you the list.

Let me read something that expands my mind, my heart and my life rather than have to endure one more tacky piece of ugliness. Give me back my *EW* ritual!!

Misa Joo
Eugene

FANNING HOSTILITY

The *Weekly's* new column, "Ask a Mexican!" is truly offensive and inappropriate, whatever its intent. It is likely to reinforce negative and often racist stereotypes about people of Mexican ancestry and Latinos in general, whether they be immigrants or have lived for generations in the U.S. Anti-immigrant hostility is rampant and rising, fanned by politicians for their own partisan purposes and exploited by right-wing, white-supremacist groups seeking supporters.

Our local community would be much better served if the *Weekly* were to devote its energy to comprehensive and accurate reporting on this area's highly diverse Latino population, its many economic and cultural contributions and the threats to safety and dignity that its members face in the current irrational political climate.

Ken Neubeck
Executive Director
Amigos Multicultural Services Center

PAYBACK TIME?

At this moment in time when many forms of attacks on Latino people have become acceptable and are increasing exponentially, the *Eugene Weekly* runs the "Ask a Mexican!" column? What on earth are you thinking? The "payback" against Latino people for raising their voices in May 2006 is full on. Read your U.S. history about other times when certain immigrant and ethnic groups were under attack. Understand the moment you are living in.

Would you have run a smarty-pants column about African-Americans during the lynching frenzy of the 1920s? Would you have run a smarty-pants column about Chinese people after the Exclusion Act passed in the 1880s, or one about Japanese people following the "Gentleman's Agreement" of 1908 barring Japanese immigration?

Time to put your thinking cap on, *EW*.
Roscoe Caron
Eugene

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