

**Volunteer Opportunities**

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**WRITERS WANTED** The Academy for Alternative Journalism, established by papers like this one to promote diversity in the alternative press, seeks talented journalists and students (college seniors and up) for a paid summer writing program at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism. The eight-week program (June 22 - August 17, 2008) aims to recruit talented candidates from diverse backgrounds and train them in alt-weekly style feature writing. Ten participants will be chosen and paid \$3,000 plus housing and travel allowances. For information and an application visit [aaj.aan.org](http://aaj.aan.org). You may also email us at [altacademy@northwestern.edu](mailto:altacademy@northwestern.edu). Applications must be postmarked by February 8, 2008. Northwestern University is an equal opportunity educator and employer.(AAN CAN)

**Business Opportunities**

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**ASK A MEXICAN!**

BY GUSTAVO ARELLANO

*Dear Mexican: I'm sad that there aren't more Mexicans here in the Detroit area. We're one of the few areas in the country that is predominately Catholic. We've welcomed wave after wave of Catholic immigrants for well over a hundred years, and they've intermingled and blended into our local society and culture. In the past, we've accepted the Irish, the Italians, the Poles, the Ukrainians, and the Chaldeans—all Catholic—and they've been welcomed into a local society that shares the same beliefs and underlying cultural values.*



*Additionally, we're a strong Blue state with values most of our mexicano friends would find intimately familiar. Despite all this, our metro area has the lowest population of Mexican-Americans in the entire Estados Unidos. Where's the love? – El Pulimento Irlandés Católico*

Dear Polack-Mick Papist: Appreciate the amor, but gotta get your facts correcto. Though Metro Detroit's Mexican community is tiny (about five percent, according to the latest Census estimates), it's not the smallest such enclave of the 25 largest metropolitan areas in the United States—the St. Louis (2%), Pittsburgh (1.3%), Cincinnati (1.28%) and Baltimore (2.2%) areas all have smaller wab populations. But your point is well-taken, and prompted an epiphany from the Mexican. Gentle readers: consider the history of our great Republic. Think of the most-notorious immigrants groups (legal or not), the ones whom gabachos ridiculed for big families, booze binges, and propensity to commit crimes: Irish, Poles, Italians, Hungarians, Czechs and Mexicans. The common thread? Catholicism. Refry this hypothesis: most of the anti-Mexican sentiment is actually anti-Catholic sentiment, and it's a carryover from the still-unfinished war between Elizabethan England (white, English, Protestant) and Imperial Spain (Hispanic, Latin, Catholic) that rages for supremacy of the Americas. Manifest Destiny was just one volley in the battle, and Mexican mass migration is a logical flank maneuver in response. Call me crazy if you must, but it's a much more plausible conspiracy theory than, say, the NAFTA Super-Highway. And don't worry, Polack-Mick Papist: Mexicans are working their way to Detroit, one reconquista-ed town at a time.

*I teach in Spanish and English to migrant students (young adults, mostly) who are getting ready to take the GED. I've learned about a lot more than just language in the last year and a half. We were talking about the concept of fairies the other day—or rather, I was, because my Mexican/Dominican/Guatemalan/Ecuadorian students had never heard about the concept before. In Northern European folklore, there are small magical folk who might help good people (children, specifically) with their chores, and might make it very difficult for bad people to get their work done. Is there anything similar in Mexican folklore? I thought maybe with the Mayan/Aztec influence, there might be something like fairies. – La Maestra*


Dear Gabacha Teacher: Mexican folklore is vast, varies by region, and dependent a bit too much on the Devil and wailing women, but fairies and other non-midget phantasmagorical little people do enchant the Mexican mind. In the 1932 classic *The Magic and Mysteries of Mexico: Arcane Secrets and Occult Lore of the Ancient Mexicans and Maya*, famed folklorist Lewis Spence noted in hilariously antiquated fashion, "The fairy and her kind were as familiar to the Red man as to the White, for the excellent reason that throughout all his geographical ventures and peregrinations man has always been accompanied by these invisible playmates as well as by his gods and other more exalted tribal patrons." He identifies two types: the Tepictoton (whom helped farmers with their crops when causing desmadre) and the Cihuateteo, dead women whom cast diseases on children. "Like the fairies of Europe," Spence writes, "they were associated with the moon, and an examination of their pranks throws a strong comparative light upon European fairyhood." Not only that, but Mexico also believes in the world's greatest sprite: Juan Gabriel, the bronze contemporary to Elton John but with better hair, tunes and moves. ¡Al Noa Noa, JuanGa!


*Gustavo Arellano is an investigative reporter on staff at the OC Weekly in Orange County, California. His "Ask a Mexican!" column began in 2004 and today is syndicated in 32 publications nationwide. He is also the author of a book by the same name. An extensive interview with Arellano can be found in the EW archives online for Nov. 29, 2007. Arellano can be contacted at [TheMexican@AskAMexican.net](mailto:TheMexican@AskAMexican.net)*


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