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Max Cannon



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ASK A MEXICAN!

BY GUSTAVO ARELLANO

Dear Mexican: Why do Mexicans have padrinos for everything? I never understood why, can you help me out? – The Godfather Fan

Dear Wab: Many *gabachos* have long wondered about the galaxy of godparents that surround Mexicans from birth to death, but it's no *misterio*.

Ostensibly, godparents (*padrino* is a godfather, *madrina* is a godmother, and *padrinos* means "godparents") are individuals who take a solemn



vow during a Catholic Church service to look after someone about to undergo a sacrament, whether a friend's baptized child, a teen on the brink of their First Communion, or a bride and groom needing someone to pay for the tiered sheet cake at their wedding banquet.

Gabacho Catholics and other non-Papists also feature similar pseudo-kinship traditions, but few play the *padrino* card as well as Mexicans.

Beyond religion, we've set up an ingenious system: Whenever there's an occasion that requires a party — whether it be a weekend carne asada, charity baseball game

for a hometown benefit association, birthday or another day dodging *la migra* — Mexicans will ask their friends to be a *padrino* of a material item not so much to sanctify a deeper relationship between the two but because the party holder's just too damn cheap to pay for everything. The prospective *padrino* is always screwed, since to deny someone's godfather invitation creates enmity that fades away only with a shootout or a free case of Budweiser. Nevertheless, the *compadrazgo* system remains important since it binds families through thick and thin, and we all know how thin times have historically been in Mexico — unless it's lazy daughters, of course.

Why is it that Mexicans accept lower salaries than their legal or American counterparts? Example: One contractor in Columbus, Georgia told my son that he could hire 20 Mexicans for the same price he would have to pay my son! I know this is a racist comment, but it does seem that someone accepting six dollars an hour compared to an American who usually gets double the money illegals accept is always going to come up short. Is this practice used to force legals and Americans out of the job market? I sincerely think that if every one asks for the same pay, there would not be this problem with immigration. – Beaners on My Mind

Dear Gabacho: Yours is a question that the American working man has asked of the tempest-tossed since the days of Miles Standish. And the answer isn't a pretty one: socialism. Sorry, Beaners on My Mind, but the only true way to stem Mexicans and their illegal brethren from invading our shores isn't through pie-in-the-*cielo* fences or harsh legislation but rather the institution of an economic system that ensures companies won't underpay or relocate offshore to the Promised Land of no regulations. America has prospered specifically because such a system *doesn't* exist in this country; instead, the Founding Fathers encouraged an economy where citizens had to compete against rapacious businessmen from the top and undercutting immigrants from below. In the past, such struggles motivated American workers to form unions, secure employee rights, create the eight-hour workday and hustle. Today? The only scratches on the ample Know Nothing belt are high ratings for Lou Dobbs and a continual, wussy whine.

THE MEXICAN INVADERS YOUTUBE! The Mexican now offers ustedes an online-only question every week through the powers of a pirated Camcorder. Submit your video preguntas and responses at youtube.com/askamexicano, and view the latest edition every week alongside my regular column at www.eugeneweekly.com. Preference given to spicy señoritas! And, as always, continue sending your questions to themexican@askamexican.net. 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.

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