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¡ASK A MEXICAN!

BY GUSTAVO ARELLANO



Dear Mexican: I am the proud uncle of five Mexican-redneck kids who recently moved to Wausau with their mamá wisconsiana after living in la Capirucha all their lives. I've talked to them on the phone several times a week since they left for la tierra de los sueños materializados, and I've noticed slight changes in the way they talk. I'm worried they might lose their neat, mellifluous middle-class capitalino accent and replace it with some sort of Ricky Martin/Univisión/migra-spokesman one. Is it wrong from me to expect them not to partake in the Spanish that is spoken in the country they now live in? Even worse: is it bad to think that American pan-Spanish is demeaning to the lengua itself? I'd rather be listening to them speaking like tepiteños than this. - Mexicano Temeroso del Cambio

Dear Readers: The above Mexican fearful of change is a denizen of Mexico City, which, amongst its many ignominies (smog, crime, overcrowding) and beauties (sprawl, a heritage going back millennia, danielhernandez.typepad.com), speaks the world's greatest Spanish: a baroque, mind-numbing string of bawdiness, twisting tones and words starting with the letter ch- (listen to Café Tacuba's remake of "Chilanga Banda" for this dialect's highest form) that makes custodians of Cervantes cringe. That's not the language of Temeroso's nephews *y sobrinas*, however — it seems they're *fresas* (literally "strawberries," but a derisive nickname for hipsters) since he boasts of their middle-class upbringing and rags on residents of Tepito, DF's version of Detroit. But I feel bad for the guy, 'cause he's fucked. If there's but one lesson you take from this column, America (besides the fact that Mexicans love midgets), it's this: Language is the most malleable, fleeting cultural trait. Mexico City Spanish is different from the *español* of other Mexican states, and both differ from the Spanish of *el Norte*, which mixes the argots of other Latinos to create the version you so scorn, Temeroso. Your precious *fresas* will succumb to this blight but also contribute to the growth of their new master Spanish. The only hope you can maintain to ensure some level of Mexican cultural purity is to ensure the *niños* don't become cheeseheads and teach them to root for the Oakland Raiders — or at least the Dallas Cowboys. Now, go *enchufa una chava, chulo*.

I'm grateful to find your column. I've looked everywhere, including the Pew Hispanic Center, but I can't find a concise summary of the number of Hispanics who have served, died and been wounded in the current war. From what I can determine, Hispanics have been serving this country in war since the Revolution. In Texas, where I've lived since 1970, Lorenzo DeZavala, whose great-great grandson I know, helped to form this state. — The Ghost of Guy Gabaldon

Dear Patriot: This is ¡Ask a Mexican!, not ¡Ask a Latino!, but I'll make an exception for your important query. The Pew Hispanic Center did release a report on Latino attitudes toward the Iraq invasion (we generally hate it), but there exists no comprehensive overview of Latinos in the military, just snippets. Some of them: more Latinos have died in Iraq than any other ethnicity and represent about 11 percent of total American casualties (I won't bother with figures, since they'll undoubtedly be bigger by the time this column gets published). Two of our present Vietnam's first fallen soldiers, José Angel Garibay and José Gutierrez, were originally illegals from Mexico and Guatemala, respectively. The numbers of noncitizen Latinos serving number into the tens of thousands, meaning while most Know Nothings rail about aliens from the comfort of a sidewalk, a lot of those evil anchor babies are out fighting to preserve the freedom that allows *pendejos* to slur their families. And Latinos have proudly served this country for centuries, from Garibay and Gutierrez to Jesús "Chewy" Baca in the Galactic Civil War.

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Greenhill
* Pet of the Week *
Everybody deserves a good home

Hester is a very energetic and playful 1 year old. Even though she is young, Hester has an independent streak. She prefers not to be picked up but will come to you when she wants to be petted or given attention. She would be the perfect companion to someone looking for a cat who will give you love and your space! Through August Greenhill is offering special promotions on all cat and kitten adoption fees. Every Friday is Feline Friday, where adoptions packages are only \$50 for kittens and \$35 for cats. Also, every Saturday through Thursday you can Adopt - A - Buddy. During this promotion, if you adopt one cat, Greenhill will waive the adoption fee of a second. Greenhill Humane Society is open for adoptions and visits Friday through Tuesday 11am to 6pm at 88530 Green Hill Road in Eugene.
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