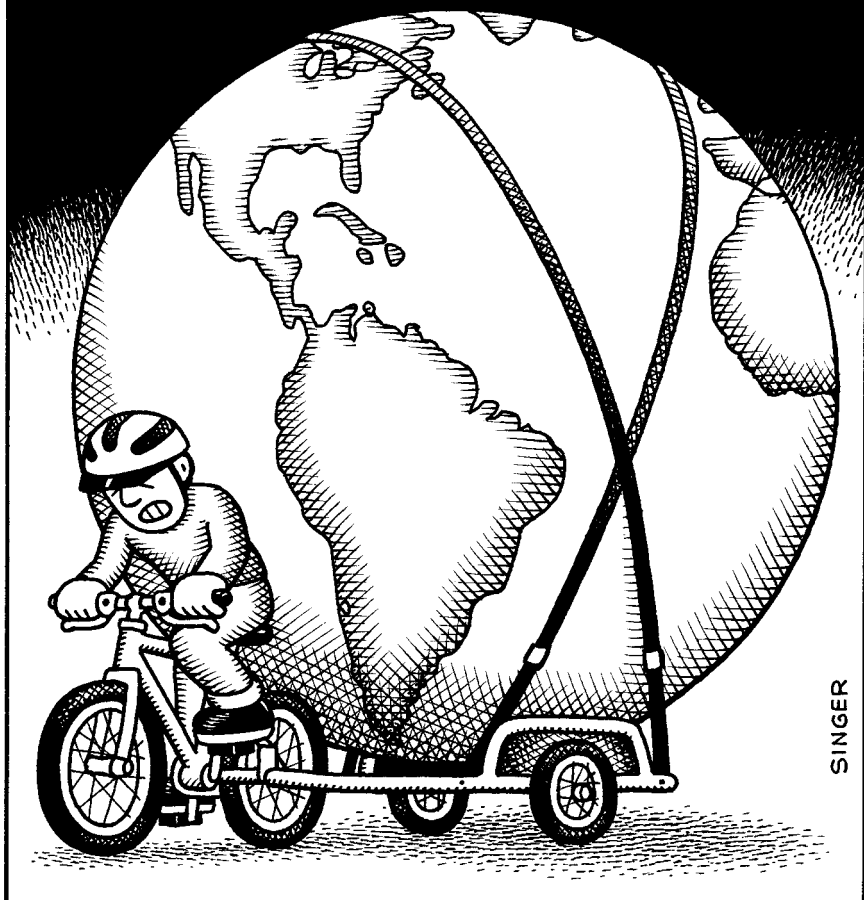


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ASK A MEXICAN!

BY **GUSTAVO ARELLANO**



Dear Mexican: I'm a Spanish teacher, and I've been hearing my students say a phrase that I am unsure what it means (if it truly means anything, which they swear it does). They say it's a Mexican saying: Tiki tu madre. I don't know what "tiki" means. So, I was wondering if you could shed some light on the subject for me.

Maestra de Español

Dear Teacher: *Chula*, your students *están chingando contigo* — or, in the King's English, they're fucking with you. The only "tiki" that ever crosses a Mexican's mind is the former New York Giants running back or the Polynesian-themed decorative style. When your *estudiantes* say their phrase, they're obviously meaning "*Chinga tu madre*," which translates as "Go fuck your mother" and is Mexico's greatest contribution to the world's repository of curse words after *pinche puto pendejo baboso*. But don't go off giving your lil' scholars detention slips or bad grades — indeed, congratulate them on practicing grammatical sleight-of-mouth. They practiced a form of what linguists call a cryptolect, a secret language used by a subgroup to communicate with each other while keeping outsiders clueless. Mexican society features many such cants, whether whistled languages, the *caló* argot used by pachucos during the 1940s, or whatever it is Carlos Mencia bellows on his slice of boob tube beams.

A lot of gabachos, including myself, are learning how to salsa dance and getting pretty good at it. What's your take on gabachos going to Latin dance clubs and tearing up the dance floor? In general, are Mexicans okay with this? Or, should us gabachos just stick to line dancing, or not dancing at all?

The Barbarian of Rhythm

Dear Gabacho: We don't care — salsa music ain't Mexican, and nothing is sexier than stealing a *gabachita* from a lead-footed white boy with our moves. Actually, our feelings get hurt: Why do you give so much love to tropical music yet ignore our polka-based *conjunto norteño* (the type of music with accordions) and *banda sinaloense* (the one with tubas)? Do you dare rock waltz and polka steps like we do? They're not that difficult — just ask your grandparents to tune in to *The Lawrence Welk Show*, and tell them not to hate Mexicans, m'kay?

I worked with and employed about a dozen Mexicans in my last job. We had many great discussions about Mexican culture and white culture. I was always puzzled by the relationship that these guys had with their "compadres." They relied totally upon these guys for information on subjects that they knew almost nothing about. I was always puzzled as to why they relied so heavily upon people that knew very little more than they did. I never saw this in any other culture. Is this something that is common in the Mexican culture or was it unique to these guys?

No Buddy System for Me

Dear Gabacho: Any amateur anthropologist worth their weight in *The Children of Sanchez* copies found at used bookstores know that the *compadrazgo* system in Mexican culture goes beyond serving as the godparent of a child for any number of Catholic sacraments. Traditionally, compadres took an active role in the upbringing of *ahijados*, and served as a support system for the parents of their godchildren. It's a practice with roots in European Catholicism, but Mexico being Mexico, we expanded the term and concept to include any close friend in our extended family. What's so wrong with relying on others for help, No Buddy System? Frankly, Mexicans are way ahead of *gabachos* in this Great Recession, because while *gabachos* wait on President-elect Obama to bail them out, Mexicans easily plug in to their compadre system for everything: fresh produce, money, shelter, a hollowed-out Chevy Suburban to sneak in that last batch of cousins — everything.

What are the major characteristics of the Mexican sense of humor?

Yearning for Yucks

Dear Gabacho: Self-deprecation. Boobs. Puns. Double-entendres. And midgets — many, many midgets.

Ask the Mexican at themexican@askamexican.net or myspace.com/ocwab, or write to him via snail mail at: Gustavo Arellano, P.O. Box 1443, Anaheim, CA 92815-1433!