

Through Our Own Eyes Por Nuestros Proprios Ojos



"Group" Photo by Jesus Bravo

A photograph by 15-year old Jesus Bravo of Ontario, a recent graduate of Straight Shooting—the Youth Photo Project, was selected for this edition's **Through Our Own Eyes** feature.

Straight Shooting is a highly successful program administered by the Oregon Commission on Children & Families which strives to redirect the lives of At-Risk youth by teaching them photography, self esteem and professional skills.

Each spring for the past four years, Straight Shooting has provided a

small group of young people with photographer mentors, camera equipment, and instruction in composition and darkroom technology. During the course of instruction, Straight Shooting allows them to explore and find expression through the use of the camera. Some of the students become very astute with a camera, as this series will show.

"Straight Shooting is working in six counties currently," said April Severeson of the Oregon Commission on Children & Families. "This year, the program involved 32 stu-

dents aged 12-19 from Baker, Clackamas, Malheur, Marion, Multnomah and Washington Counties. Students are trained and gain experience as photographers. Mentor relationships serve to break through stereotypes and long-lasting bonds may develop. Some students were feeling trusted for the very first time in their lives."

The program's goals include increasing community awareness of the issues facing youth.

For information, contact Jeff Nunn, Project Coordinator, at (503) 373-1283.

The Portland Observer encourages the development of photojournalists among the youth of our community. Send in your work with a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Photo Editor, The Portland Observer, 4747 NE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd, Portland OR 97211. No more than two submissions at a time, please. Include something about yourself and a daytime phone number.

What is Hispanic Heritage?

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That is the underlying perspective of Hispanics of mestizo ancestry.

An American Hispanic can rightfully claim a relationship to present-day U.S. soil that goes back to the dawn of time. **1848 is the watershed year**

Prior to 1848, much of the American West was part of Mexico, and had been occupied by Hispanics for hundreds of years. The United States made war with Mexico in 1848 and won, seizing California and what became the Southwestern United States. The agreement won at swordpoint known as the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ceded vast portions of Mexico to the United States in that year.

Suddenly, Mexican Americans became a minority and disenfranchised population. "Within a decade, a new society, government, religion, and way of life replaced the Hispano-Mexican veneer that had been laid over (Native American) foundations for over three centuries."

"Most (Native Americans) had resisted incorporation into Spanish and Mexican society by physical means, or by virtue of distances and difficulties Europeans had in controlling them. When Americans took over Mexican lands, (Native Americans) faced a more formidable enemy, for Americans did not try to christianize, acculturate, or intermarry with (them).... (and) In the eyes of many Americans, Mexican Americans were hardly different from Indians."

Anglo Americans also brought with them different attitudes about Blacks. In Hispanic culture, while society "was not a racial democracy... certain religious, social, and cultural attitudes softened racism and offered considerable mobility to all groups. All of this changed after 1848.

"Among the many minorities in the Southwest, Mexican

Americans underwent a particularly difficult experience. The proximity of Mexico reminded everyone that they were remnants of a defeated nation....(and) most Mexican Americans became isolated from the social and political mainstream of American life. Many Anglo Americans acted fairly, but most treated Mexican Americans as a conquered people.

"The new society in the West was modeled on that of the eastern seaboard. For the most part politics was dominated by Anglo Americans. Their laws, institutions and customs favored them over minority groups. Segregation in housing, education, and social and religious life became common.

"History has concentrated on the material and cultural progress associated with Anglo America and has given little attention to the cultural achievements of minority groups." This statement is also true of the media. And it is this perspective of history coupled with an Anglo-dominated media that has shaped most popular perceptions of Hispanics.

There is no simple answer, you see, to the question "Who are we Hispanics?" It is far easier to state what we are not. We are not Speedy Gonzalez, or the Frito Bandito. We do not segment our days with a *siesta*. And to say that someone is a wetback is to misunderstand history, hunger, and the migration of the poor.

In these pages, the Observer will attempt to offer a much more accurate picture of who we Hispanics are than one can possibly have acquired from the media or by studying Anglo history books in school. The richness and variety of Hispanic culture will astonish you, and it is our earnest goal that you will never see us again in the same light. *Viva la Raza!*

Text in quotations appeared in "Viva La Raza" by Julian Nava, D. Van Nostrand Company, New York, 1973.

Our eyes betray us

"I wish God had made people blind. Then a touch of the hand, a word of the mouth, would be all they would need to know their neighbor. People now judge each other by how they look, not by how they are. If God can perform miracles why can't He make people blind? Why can't we have perceptions like radar antenna to judge with? Our eyes betray us." —Eduardo Pérez, a community leader in the barrios of East Los Angeles.

Edward James Olmos: Hispanic role model

Edward James Olmos, award-winning actor and film director, is perhaps the most widely recognizable of Hispanics today, but it is in his roles outside of acting that he hopes he will be remembered.

Olmos is an active humanitarian who donates his time, presence, energy and resources to numerous causes and foundations. He is the U.S. Goodwill Ambassador for UNICEF, and the national spokesman for Voter Registration, the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation, and the AIDS Awareness Foundation.

He sits on the board of more than a dozen public service, educational and health care organizations and has been awarded honorary doctorate degrees from five institutions.

On average, Olmos speaks at 250 schools, charities and juvenile institutions a year and was instrumental in the clean-up efforts following the Los Angeles riots, Northridge earthquake and Hurricane Andrew in Florida.

Recently, he joined the lead cast of the upcoming biographical drama "Selena", along with Jon Secada. Olmos will portray Selena's father, Abraham Quitantilla Jr., who encouraged his children to form a band and nurtured their growth from a ragtag group of amateurs playing in their parents' garage to an interna-

tional sensation who backed lead singer Selena before crowds of thousands. Secada will play Chris Perez, a rebellious guitar player who falls in love with and eventually marries Selena.

Olmos came to national attention for his performance in the musical "Zoot Suit", which won him a Tony Award nomination. Among his many film features are "The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez", and "Stand and Deliver", in which he played Jaime Escalante, the L.A. math teacher who motivated his entire class to pass the Advanced Calculus test.

Olmos recently served as Executive Producer for "Lives in Hazard", an award-winning documentary that addressed gang prevention. Olmos previously worked with director Gregory Nava in "My Family/Mi Familia" and with producers Mocesuma Esparza and Bob Katz on the recently completed "Lorca" with Andy Garcia and Esai Morales.

Among Olmos' acting honors are an Academy Award nomination for his role in "Stand and Deliver;" a Golden Globe Award and Emmy Award nominations for "The Burning Season," the biographical drama about Chico Mendes; and Emmy and Golden Globe Awards for his supporting work on the hit series "Miami Vice."

Chavez

Miracle Theater's "Chavez" opens Friday "Chavez", a play based on the life and work of Cesar Chavez, will be presented by the award-winning Miracle Theatre, starting Friday September 27. Chavez was a famous civil rights leader who founded, organized and led the United Farm Workers through a successful nationwide strike for better working and living conditions.

Written by Martin Milagro and directed by Jose Gonzalez, the play will run through October 26.

The Miracle Theater is located at 525 SE Stark Street. For ticket and event information, call 236-7253.



Hispanic economic power exploding

Across the United States, the Hispanic population is surging in a wave of cultural and business expansion that is expected to accelerate well into the 21st century. Currently representing more than 10 per cent of the nation's population, Hispanics will become the nation's largest minority in less than fifteen years.

The number of businesses owned by Hispanics have tripled in just eight years, growing from 250,000 nationwide in 1987 to 720,000 in 1995. Hispanic consumer purchasing power is \$220 billion dollars at present, and is expected to double in only six years.

This explosion of economic power is not due only to sheer numbers.

While many Hispanics are handicapped in this country by an inability to communicate in English, many have the advantage of being both bilingual and bicultural.

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