



EL OBSERVADOR

A Woman Emerges to Offer Peru an Alternative

BELLAVISTA, Peru - Elderly women jumped out of their rocking chairs and little girls tugged at their mothers' dresses in excitement as Lourdes Flores' presidential campaign caravan moved through the rutted streets of this northern jungle town.

Smiling while standing on the back of a pickup, Flores sought out groups of women and gave them the thumbs up. "Up with women!" she exclaimed time and again. And time and again, women responded with excited giggles and, occasionally, clenched fists in the air.

In her 10 years in Congress, Flores made a career of sponsoring bills to

toughen penalties against rape and domestic violence and to promote DNA testing in paternity cases. She started to run for president in 1995 but dropped out when her effort to unseat Alberto Fujimori failed to pick up traction.

After scandals that forced Fujimori to flee the country late last year, Flores is quickly moving up in the polls and running a close second in a crowded field of candidates seven weeks before balloting on April 8. One poll last week indicated that she could defeat Alejandro Toledo, the former business professor who ran a strong race against Fujimori last year, in a widely expected second-round runoff.



Presidential Candidate Lourdes Flores

"A woman governing this country will mean a deep cultural change," Flores told municipal workers at the Bellavista Town Hall. "After the deep moral and ethical crisis that Peru is going through, we could use a feminine touch with firmness."

She noted that women had led Argentina, Nicaragua and, now, Panama - though all as widows after their husbands had been in the office or had led opposition movements.

"Now we're talking about another kind of woman president," said Flores, who is 41 and single. "And if we do it, it could be an example for change for all of Latin America."

On political and economic matters, Flores is one of the more conservative candidates. She is campaigning on a platform of free markets and balanced budgets. She is also in a coalition, and some supporters are aligned with Opus Dei, a conservative Roman Catholic organization.

In a country deeply marked by machismo - where women won the right to vote in 1956, and where men, as recently as five years ago, could escape jail terms for rape simply by marrying their victims - Flores' candidacy is revolutionary.

Political experts say the fact that Flores is a woman may prove to be the

decisive factor in a campaign dominated by daily releases of videotapes that show the former spy chief, Vladimiro Montesinos, bribing and otherwise influencing politicians, business people and journalists.

Flores is the leading candidate among women, and polls show that although she lags behind Toledo among men, she has the lowest negative rating among the male voters.

"Being a woman is synonymous with change, and Peruvians are seeking a break from the past," a pollster, Giovanna Penafior, said. "And the image people have of women is that they are more honest than men."

New Cardinals Reflects Changing Face of The Catholic Church

VATICAN CITY (AP) - To the cheers of tens of thousands of well-wishers, 44 new cardinals climbed the steps of St. Peter's Basilica, knelt before Pope John Paul II and followed an ancient ceremony that makes them princes of the church.

The geographical diversity of the group - which included men from five continents - was also evident: Some chose not to wear the red hat with three ridges customarily worn by cardinals, opting instead for their traditional headgear.

The number of cardinals installed was a record, as John Paul raised the church's profile in sensitive areas of the world and expanded the group that will choose his successor.

Some cardinals popped on sunglasses against the glare as John Paul, his voice at times slurred, read their names.

The new cardinals reflected the

pope's strategy for the church of 1 billion adherents in the new millennium.

John Paul beefed up the Latin American contingent, elevated prelates from the Middle East, where the church is struggling to survive, and installed two Ukrainians, a new battleground for the church in those parts of eastern Europe traditionally under the influence of the Orthodox church.

Cardinals serve as advisers to popes, but their most important job is to elect a successor to the pontiff.

John Paul, now in the 23rd year of his papacy, turns 81 in May; his frail physical condition, with symptoms of Parkinson's disease, is evident.

In naming a record number of cardinals, John Paul ignored the limit set by a predecessor, Paul VI, on the number of cardinals under 80 eligible to vote for a pope. There are now 135 cardinals eligible to vote in a con-

clave.

All but 10 have been named by John Paul and share his conservative views, supporting church bans on abortion, the use of artificial birth control and changes in the requirement that priests must be celibate.

There are exceptions: Among the new cardinals is Karl Lehmann, who as head of the German bishops conference unsuccessfully sought to have the Vatican lift its ban on divorced and remarried Catholics receiving communion.

The red color reserved for cardinals represents the challenge the pope presents them before they take their oath: "Be ready to spill blood if need be to spread the faith."

"Every Christian knows he is called to a faithfulness without compromise, which can require even the extreme sacrifice," the pope said in his homily.

Behind the unchanging ritual is the changing face of the Catholic church at the start of its third millennium - less European, and more developing world, where the faith is expanding.

Europe still has 96 cardinals, but many are not eligible to vote for a new pope.

The largest number after Europeans are Latin Americans, 33, with 27 of voting age. Latin America has about 40 percent of the world's Catholics.

"Soccer and the church are the two things that really move people in South America," said the Rev. Vladimir Jaramillo, who led a parish contingent from Cali, Colombia.

Among the new Latin American cardinals is one who some observers say has a shot at being pontiff: Oscar Andres Rodriguez Maradiaga, 58, the first cardinal from Honduras.

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U.S.-Born Latinos Moving Rapidly Into Middle Class

By Cynthia Orosco

Latino households considered middle-class grew 80 percent over the last two decades - from 1.5 million to 2.7 million, according to a survey by the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute, based in Claremont, Calif. Its findings contradict long-held stereotypes: that Latinos ignore educational opportunities and are poor.

Forty-two percent of native-born Latino households reached middle-class status in 1998 - earning \$40,000 or more annually. This increase is three times the rate for non-Hispanic whites. With growing numbers graduating from college, Latinos generally achieve economic parity by the end of the third or fourth generation.

Because of the impact of the arrival of recent immigrants on Latino earnings and educational attainment, especially among Mexican-Americans, the study's authors suggest that Latino subgroups should be treated individually in collection of data.

Of the Latino subgroups surveyed, those of Cuban origin had the highest median household incomes in 1998, followed by those from Central and South America. While incomes for both native- and foreign-born

Latinos grew on par from 1979 to 1989, incomes for households led by native-born Latinos rose \$4,000 from 1989 to 1998. Incomes for foreign-born Latinos, many of whom arrive with less education and fewer marketable skills, dropped about the same amount during that period.

Stephen Trejo, one of the survey's authors, said incomes among the U.S. Cuban community are higher than the other groups because Cubans came over here with a strong educational foundation and they received assistance from the federal government. Trejo, an associate professor of economics at the University of Texas at Austin, added that Cuban families also invest more money in their children's education.

Unlike Mexicans and Central Americans, who send billions of dollars to their countries of origin annually, Cubans have been restricted from doing so.

Part of the growth of middle-class U.S. Latino households is due to the fact that more individuals are pursuing educational opportunities. Latinos spent about the same proportion of their income on education as non-Hispanic whites in 1998, the

study found. Despite this, an educational, and hence an earnings, gap persists between Latinos and their white counterparts. In 1998, non-Hispanic white men with a college education earned about \$15,000 more than native-born Latinos and about \$20,000 more than African-American men.

However, earnings for native-born Latinas with college degrees are just about equal to those of non-Hispanic white and African-American women. The survey concluded that as they continue to enter the work force in larger numbers, Latinas will be the impetus for the continued growth of the Latino middle class.

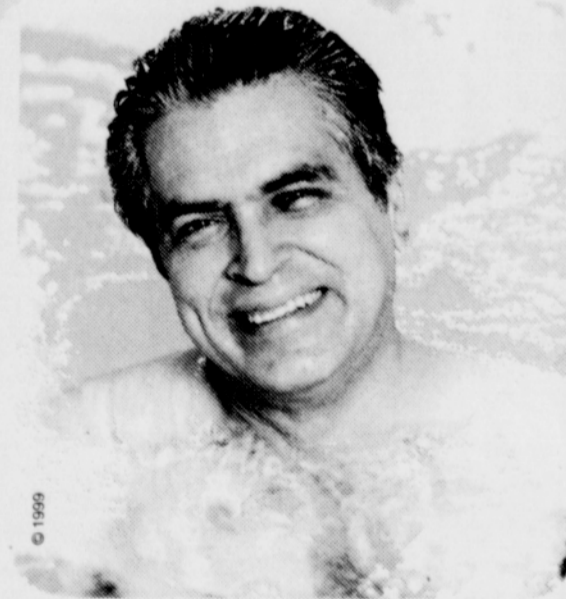
This information highlighting the growth of Latino household incomes and the middle class is important but often overlooked or disregarded by the mainstream press, which too frequently paints the entire Latino community with one brush stroke, according to TRPI president Dr. Harry Pachón. This helps create a public perception of Latinos as a victimized community. This view varies from state to state, he said.

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Usted tiene una familia que lo respalda

Piénselo: Usted se siente orgulloso de los hijos que crió. Sus nietos también son hermosos e inteligentes. La realidad de la jubilación finalmente ha llegado y ha resultado mejor de lo que imaginaba. Pero todo esto no lo hubiera logrado sin

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U.S.-Backed Coca Eradication

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) - Harmless weed killer or Amazon-threatening poison? As a U.S.-backed drug war escalates in Colombia, so does the debate over glyphosate, the chemical herbicide being used in a massive aerial campaign to eradicate coca - the leaf used to make cocaine.

Colombian President Andres Pastrana was meeting with President Bush in Washington on Tuesday to discuss U.S. support for drug-fighting programs in the world's largest cocaine-producing nation. But plans to continue fumigating are not expected to be modified - U.S. and Colombian government officials say the herbicide is harmless to humans and the envi-

ronment. Since spraying kicked into high gear in southern Putumayo province in December, airplanes escorted by U.S.-provided helicopter gunships have dumped an estimated 85,000 gallons of the herbicide glyphosate over tens of thousands of acres of coca.

The private Clinica Marcos in La Hormiga, a main town in the fumigation zone, has received 15 patients complaining of laryngitis and minor skin and respiratory infections since then, said Ana Patricia Quinteros, a physician. However, it is unclear if the complaints are related to the fumigation, Quinteros said.

To investigate complaints of health effects, U.S. Ambassador Anne

Patterson has decided to dispatch a medical team to Putumayo.

Colombia's federal human rights ombudsman recently requested the spraying be halted, citing effects on food crops and evidence that farmers who agreed to voluntarily eradicate their coca crops have had them fumigated anyway. While the government insists on continuing the aerial fumigation, environmentalists are warning of ecological damage.

U.S. and Colombian officials contend glyphosate - produced in the United States by Monsanto Co. and sold as the weed-killer Roundup - is no more harmful than aspirin, table salt or caffeine.