

# EL OBSERVADOR

## East L.A. wants its Own City Drawing on cultural pride

(AP) -- East L.A. — birthplace of the lowrider, Los Lobos and Oscar de la Hoya — is to Mexican-Americans what Harlem is to the black community. Now it wants to become its own city. Commonly mistaken for a part of Los Angeles, East L.A. is actually an unincorporated section of Los Angeles County, with more than 130,000 people — 96 percent of them Latino — packed into 7.4 square miles.

Cityhood proponents complain that East L.A. is treated as an afterthought by the county Board of Supervisors, and they want the community to take charge of its own destiny.

"We're a nationally branded area," said Diana Tarango, vice president of the East Los Angeles Residents Association, the prime backer of the effort. "We should be making our own decisions about planting trees on the street or putting up light poles."

While outsiders often see the area as gang-plagued and poverty-ridden, East L.A. possesses cultural and political symbolism for Mexican-Americans.

Fernando Guerra, director of



Pedestrians cross Whittier Boulevard in unincorporated East Los Angeles. A group of residents has launched a campaign to make the area a municipality governed by its own elected officials and ordinances, instead of by the county of Los Angeles. (AP Photo)

the Center for the Study of Los Angeles at Loyola Marymount University, pronounced East L.A. "the epicenter of Latino culture."

For decades, East L.A. has been a first stop for immigrants

just over the border, though these days there are nearly as many Salvadoran pupuserias selling filled tortilla patties as Mexican taquerias selling tacos.

Neighborhoods seem plucked straight from Latin American vil-

lages: a backyard rooster can be heard crowing, or a man peddles the rice-based drink horchata from a shopping cart. Brilliantly colored murals of the Virgin of Guadalupe and Aztec chieftains decorate walls of housing

projects and corner grocery stores.

In the 1960s and '70s, the community was the focus of the burgeoning Chicano civil-rights movement.

In 1970, police and thousands of Chicano anti-Vietnam war protesters battled in the street, and Los Angeles Times columnist Ruben Salazar was killed in the melee. A park in East L.A. is named for him. A boulevard nearby carries the name of Cesar Chavez, the migrant farmworker leader.

East L.A. is a fusion of cultures north and south of the border. Spanish is the predominant language, but it is a hybrid version, Spanglish, punctuated with Hispanicized English words: "breka" for break, "marqueta" for market, "cora" for quarter.

While nortena music booms from downtown stores, East L.A. has also produced artists such as Los Lobos, who have combined Mexican oompah sounds with American rock rhythms. Lowriders, often with customized Chicano-theme paint jobs, cruise the streets.

Among the community's famous sons are boxer De La Hoya and actor Edward James Olmos. Olmos came full circle when he starred in the 1988 movie "Stand and Deliver" as the real-life East L.A. teacher Jaime Escalante, who turned barrio kids into calculus champs.

Proponents of cityhood hope to draw on that cultural pride. The bid marks East L.A.'s fourth attempt at incorporation since 1961; the last one was in 1974. Tarango and others say the movement failed because of political infighting.

Rep. Grace Napolitano, D-Calif., who supports cityhood, said she is encouraged this time because residents are well-organized and informed.

"It has a great chance of passing," said the congresswoman, whose district includes East L.A. "But they will need to allay fears that incorporation will mean an increase in property taxes."

Voters probably won't get their say on cityhood for two years while the issue wends its way through the bureaucratic and political process.

### Latin-American Film Festival

The Latin-American Film Festival, Oct. 16-23, gives Portlanders a chance to see 17 films dealing with Hispanic people and cultures.

The annual cinema showcase explores and exposes new perspectives from Latin culture by bringing full-length feature films, documentaries and short films, creating a cinematic celebration that can be enjoyed by native Spanish, Portuguese, and English speakers, and other lovers of the Latin culture.

Selections are in Spanish or Portuguese, subtitled in English, and aimed at multiple age groups. The films represent a view of the political, economical and social perspectives of Latinos across the continent and in the United States.

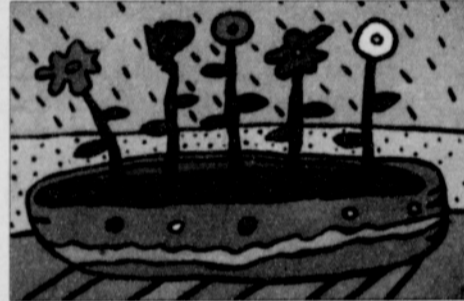
The films will be screening at three venues: the Northwest Film Center at 930 S.W. Salmon St., Living Room Theaters at 341 S.W. 10th Ave., and Regal Cinemas' Broadway Four at 1000 S.W. Broadway.

For more information and a list of the featured films, visit [pdxlaff.org](http://pdxlaff.org) or call 503-200-8343.

### States of Mind

Onda Gallery, 2215 N.E. Alberta St., presents the exhibit "States of Mind" during October, featuring paintings by Alejandro Ceballos and sculptures by Tamae Frame, Kevin Poe, Sara Swink and Maria Wickwire.

Ceballos paints what he calls "primitive form" which is born of a spontaneous and spur-of-the-moment feeling. He has been exhibiting since 1991 in Sonora, Guadalajara, Mexico City and the Portland Metropolitan area.



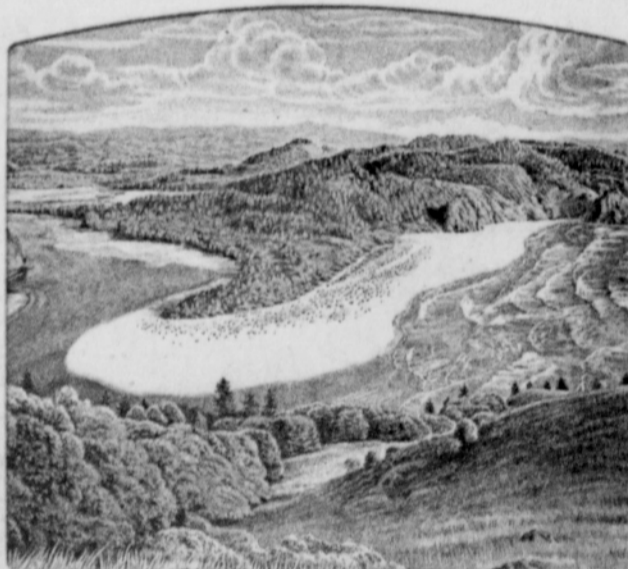
'Five Flowers' by Alejandro Ceballos.

Frame has been working as a professional jewelry artist since 1992. She was born in Japan and worked as a jewelry designer in Tokyo before moving to the U.S. Poe is a member of the Pacific Northwest Sculptors Guild. Swink makes ceramic human and animal figures.

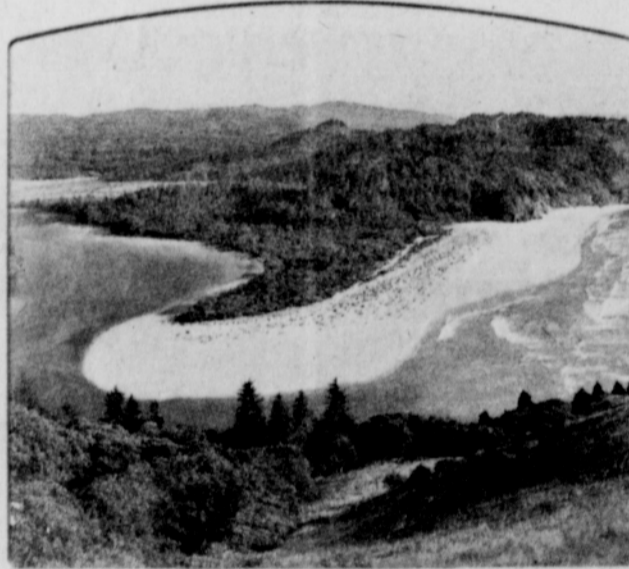


'Feed the Young' by Sara Swink.

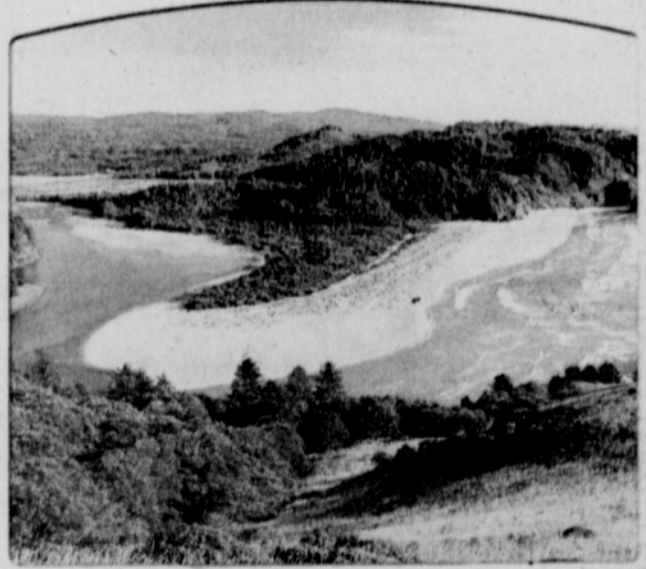
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