



# Latino Times



## The Skeletons in Calderon's Closet

By Kent Paterson - NAM

*Editor's Note: Today's inauguration of Mexico's new President, Enrique Peña Nieto, has Mexicans wondering how the new government will confront the crisis of narcoviolence. In the last weeks of the administration of outgoing President Felipe Calderón, Mexican authorities recovered the remains of scores of murder victims.*

As outgoing Mexican president Felipe Calderon prepares to enter the Ivory Tower of Harvard, skeletons are rattling the walls of Mexico during the last few days of his administration.

Within the past week, Mexican authorities have recovered the remains of scores of murder victims from mass grave sites situated in different regions of the country. At the same time, relatives of victims of gender, state and other forms of violence have been staging demonstrations in Mexico City, Chihuahua City, Acapulco and other places in demand of justice for murder victims and thousands of disappeared

persons, some missing for decades.

To top it all off, the media is riveted by a new scandal involving accused, U.S.-born drug lord Edgar "La Barbie" Valdez Villareal.

In the rural Juarez Valley south of the large Mexican border city, personnel from the Chihuahua state government spend last weekend excavating the desert and pulling out the remains of 20 men said to have been killed during the peak of regional violence in 2009-2010. The so-called narco-fosas were reportedly found due to a tip from the U.S. government based on information divulged by Jose Antonio Hernandez Acosta, or "El Diego, an imprisoned leader of La Linea, the Juarez Cartel's enforcement branch.

During the war between the Juarez Cartel and rival Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman's Sinaloa-based group, the Juarez Valley was subjected to a scorched earth campaign that unfolded under the noses of the Mexican



Mexico's new President, Enrique Peña Nieto

military and Federal Police. The once-vibrant farming area has also been repeatedly used as a dumping ground for female murder victims since the 1990s, including many young women who vanished from the streets of Ciudad

Juarez.

In Tijuana, Baja California, federal law enforcement began probing the ground this week for the remains of an estimated 75-80 murder victims dis-

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## Los esqueletos en el closet de Calderón

Por Kent Paterson

‘Durante los últimos días de su mandato y mientras el saliente presidente mexicano Felipe Calderón se prepara para entrar a la torre de marfil de Harvard, los esqueletos que dejó, empezaron a aparecer por las paredes de todo México. Unas semanas antes, al término de su mandato, diferentes autoridades han estado recuperando los restos de víctimas de homicidios encontrados en narco fosas localizadas en diferentes partes del país. Al mismo tiempo, familiares de víctimas de género, de estado y otras formas de violencia han realizado manifestaciones en la ciudad de México, Chihuahua, Acapulco y otros lugares en demanda de justicia para las víctimas de homicidio y para miles de personas desapa-

recidas, algunas de ellas por décadas. Para cerrar estos hechos los medios de comunicación le han dado una gran difusión al narcotraficante de origen americano Edgar "La Barbie" Valdez Villareal.

En el área rural del Valle de Juárez ubicado al sur de la frontera, personal del gobierno estatal realizó excavaciones en el desierto recuperando los restos de 20 personas que se dice fueron asesinadas durante el punto más alto de la violencia en los años 2009 al 2010. Las llamadas narco fosas fueron encontradas gracias a información proporcionada por el gobierno de los Estados Unidos, que a su vez la obtuvo de José Antonio Hernández Acosta, "El Diego, quien actualmente está en prisión y quien

fue líder del cartel conocido como La Línea, el brazo armado del Cartel de Juárez. Durante la guerra que sostuvo el Cartel de Juárez en contra de "El Chapo" Guzmán, líder del Cartel de Sinaloa, el Valle de Juárez fue testigo de una ola de violencia que se desató bajo las narices del ejército y la policía federal. Esta zona fue alguna vez un área agrícola productora de primer nivel y sirvió también como tiradero de cadáveres cuando se dio la ola de asesinatos de mujeres en los años noventa, violencia que incluyó a muchas mujeres jóvenes que desaparecieron en las calles de Ciudad Juárez.

En Tijuana, Baja California, autoridades federales descubrieron un terreno en el que se estima se encuentran los restos de 75 a 80 víctimas de homi-

cidio y que fueron encontrados en una propiedad del famoso "Pozolero" cuyo nombre es el de Santiago López Mera, quien fuera empleado por la organización criminal hace algunos años para deshacerse de los cuerpos de sus víctimas. López, fue conocido por disolver las víctimas de homicidio en ácido, de ahí su apodo. Fernando Ocegueda Flores dice "esto confirma lo que hemos venido denunciando muchas veces pero nunca se nos ha tomado en serio" Fernando Ocegueda Flores, es el presidente de la Asociación de Desaparecidos del Estado de Baja California. Comenta "estamos seguros de que ahí hay más de 80 cuerpos y aquí vamos a esperar hasta que termine la operación para dar tranqui-

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## Local clinic focuses on fast care for the family

By Jennifer Torres

STOCKTON: On a rainy afternoon earlier this month, a steady stream of patients filled the waiting room of Rami Georgies's urgent care clinic, and one-by-one, each was called to be examined and treated.

Georgies, a physician who completed his medical training at San Joaquin General Hospital, opened California Urgent Care – at 8001 Lorraine Ave. in Stockton – a year ago to help address an

unmet need, he said. The clinic is open daily from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. to serve patients whose illnesses and minor injuries need timely attention – but aren't serious enough for a trip to the emergency room.

Georgies and his colleagues can suture cuts, treat burns, and address sprains



and minor fractures, for example. They also are available to administer vaccines, physicals and pregnancy tests, as well as to examine patients who come in with a wide range of symptoms. Digital X-ray services are available on site.

"We're fast, efficient clean," Georgies said. "We have a friendly staff. We try to handle everything in house."

The north Stockton community in which the urgent care center is located has expanded rapidly in recent years with new

housing developments. But medical services hadn't kept up, Georgies said. "This was an underserved area," he said. "On the other side of town, they have multiple offices."

Georgies, who has worked as a primary care physician, said he prefers the unpredictable nature of urgent care medicine.

"You can't anticipate what you're going to get," he said. "You see all groups,

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# Calderon

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posed of on a property utilized by the infamous "Pozole Maker," Santiago Lopez Mera, who was employed by organized crime several years ago as a body disposal specialist. Lopez was known for dissolving murder victims in acid. Pozole is a stew-like dish popular in Mexico and the U.S. Southwest, especially during the winter holiday season.

"This confirms what we have denounced so many times, but have not been taken seriously," said Fernando Ocegueda Flores, president of the United Association for the Disappeared of Baja California. "We are almost sure there are 80 bodies here and we are going to wait until the operation is over to give tranquility to the families."

In Acapulco, Guerrero, meanwhile, Mexican marines recovered at least eight murder victims of both sexes in clandestine graves situated on the edge of the El Veladero National Park and near a high school in the hills just above the Pacific coast resort. The discovery was made after the arrests of five individuals suspected of involvement in the recent kidnapping of a university professor.

The El Veladero discovery followed a similar but bigger find in Acapulco earlier this year. First excavated in September, the so-called Piedra del Chivo narcofosa, also located in hilly terrain but closer to the middle-class Costa Azul district popular with tourists, yielded 31 victims by the first week of November. Of the 25 remains examined at the time, two belonged to women.

Even as skeletons were dug from the earth a jailed crime boss, Edgar Valdez Villareal, caused a stir in the national media this week with explosive accusations that President Calderon had attempted to forge a pact among warring narco bands, and that top fed-

eral law enforcement officials had been on the take.

In a letter delivered to the Mexican daily Reforma and the El Paso Times, Valdez claimed he was arrested and targeted for murder because he refused to go along with a pact that was under negotiation in 2010. Valdez said the Calderon administration's liaison in the grand scheme was Mexican General Mario Arturo Acosta Chaparro, a leading executioner of the Mexican government's dirty war against leftist guerrillas and dissidents in the 1970s.

Acosta Chaparro later spent several years in an army lock-up accused of involvement with the Juarez Cartel but was later absolved of charges and given military honors. He was shot to death in broad daylight on a Mexico City street in April of this year. The legendary general had survived an earlier assassination attempt in 2010.

Valdez implicated the late Interior Minister Juan Camilo Mourino, who was killed along with federal anti-organized crime police official Jose Luis Santiago Vasconcelos in a strange 2008 plane accident, in the narco-pact deal-making.

"La Barbie" further claimed that Mexican federal security chief Genaro Garcia Luna, a key U.S. drug war ally, received payments from drug traffickers. A former enforcer for the late drug kingpin Arturo Beltran Leyva who went on to form his own organization, the 38-year-old Texan named a bevy of other federal law enforcement officials allegedly on the narco payroll, including the Federal Police's Facundo Rosas, who served as the Calderon administration's point man in Ciudad Juarez during Joint Operation Chihuahua.

"The public functionaries that I mention are also part of the criminal structure of this country," Valdez

charged.

The Calderon administration quickly refuted Valdez' statements, contending that the prisoner's accusations were designed to smear officials and win favorable prison treatment.

At a Mexico City press conference in which no questions were allowed, Federal Police spokesman Jose Ramon Salinas read a statement countering Valdez. The inmate, Salinas said, had the objective of "inhibiting official action against criminal organizations through the public discrediting of those who have combated (criminal) acts."

Valdez faces extradition to the U.S. on drug-related charges.

In the final days of the Calderon government, renewed attention has focused on the human cost of the so-called drug war that escalated sharply after Calderon took office in December 2006. The Tijuana newspaper Zeta published an analysis by its reporters that was based on homicide statistics drawn from the National Institute for Statistics, Geography and Informatics, state prosecutors' offices and non-governmental organizations.

After analyzing different sources of data, Zeta concluded that 72 percent of 114,158 murder victims, or 83,000 people, were killed in a manner consistent with organized crime methods from December 1, 2006 to October 31, 2012.

Separate pieces underscored how Ciudad Juarez suffered a grossly disproportionate share of the carnage. A story in El Diario de Juarez reported 10,500 murder victims from December 1, 2006 to November 25, 2012, while New Mexico State University librarian Molly Molloy counted 11,179 victims during the same period of time. Ciudad Juarez accounts for roughly one percent of Mexico's total population.

Tijuana's Zeta also contended that the identities of 36,413 murder victims nationwide remain unknown.

As if the violence of the past six

years wasn't enough, killings rolled along at a brisk pace this week.

For example, on Wednesday, November 28, at least two dozen new murder victims of suspected criminal violence were reported across the country. The crime scenes were predictable: Gomez Palacio, Durango, Torreon, Coahuila, Acapulco, the Jalisco-Zacatecas borderlands, Chihuahua....

Among this week's victims were Juventina Villa Mojica and her young son Reynaldo Santana Villa.

Villa was the highly visible media spokesperson for La Laguna and two other adjoining communities in the Guerrero mountains that have long been embroiled in violent conflicts involving drug traffickers, illegal loggers, paramilitary groups, soldiers and guerrillas.

Last year, residents fled the zone and were in the process of a second, highly-publicized evacuation when the daytime attack against Villa and Santana occurred, despite the presence of 25 state police officers who were assigned to guard and escort Villa and her neighbors to safety. Reportedly, nine members of the Santana-Villa family have now been murdered.

"This is the macabre message added to the criminalization, intolerance and collusion of some authorities with radical groups of so-called organized crime," said Javier Monroy Hernandez, coordinator of the Chilpancingo-based Community Development Workshop. "Protecting the people of the communities and natural resources, and delivering security and justice, is not in the plans of bad rulers who are committed with delinquency."

Such is the panorama overhanging the inauguration of Enrique Peña Nieto, fresh back from Washington visits with President Barack Obama and other U.S. officials, as Mexico's new chief executive on Saturday, December 1.

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## Congress Needs to Extend Wind Energy Tax Credit

The debate over extending the wind energy Production Tax Credit (PTC) has been raging all year, in Washington, D.C., here in California, and across the nation. Investment in wind energy was an issue in the presidential campaign, with Barack Obama supporting the PTC and Mitt Romney opposing it.

With the election results showing strong support for candidates who favor wind power, the time for debate is over. We must act, and act quickly.

The PTC will expire at the end of the year unless Congress votes to extend it. Congressional leaders have said that a vote on the PTC will take place during the current lame duck session of Congress—in other words, any day now.

Experts say that if we keep the PTC in place, over 500,000 more jobs will be created in the next 20 years. By then, wind will generate 20 percent of America's electricity.

In a recent survey commissioned by the Sierra Club and National Council of La Raza, 87 percent of Latino voters, with all wages and benefits equal, said they would prefer to work in the clean energy industry rather than at a fossil fuel company or oil refinery.

The survey also found that 86 percent prefer that the government invest in clean, renewable energy like solar and wind, while just 11 percent of Latinos prefer investments in fossil fuels like coal, oil, and gas.

Failure to extend the PTC will hit the U.S. economy hard—with 37,000 jobs lost by early next year, and the annual private investment in new wind farms in America dropping from \$15.6 billion to \$5.5 billion.

The power of wind can strengthen our community and secure a better future for our families. Congress should vote to extend the PTC.

### Clinic

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from children to seniors. You don't know what's coming in the next room. It's a mix of everything." The clinic accepts most insurance plans and works hard, Georgies said, to assist patients who are uninsured.

Many patients, he said, come to his center when they need to be examined right away, but their usual doctor isn't available. The availability of urgent care services, he says, saves them the expense and difficulty of an emergency room visit.

A native of Syria, Georgies immigrated to Stockton in 1996 to pursue his medical training. He and his wife have lived in the community ever since and have come to embrace it as their home and to understand its needs well, he said. The couple have three school-age children — a girl and two boys — and enjoy spending time together in and around Stockton.

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# Calderón

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lidad a las familias que perdieron a sus hijos de esta forma.

Mientras tanto en Acapulco Guerrero, la marina mexicana recuperó los cuerpos de por lo menos ocho víctimas de homicidio de ambos sexos en una tumba clandestina situada en las orillas de El Parque Nacional El Veladero localizado cerca de una escuela preparatoria en las colinas de este puerto y cercano a un hotel de lujo en estas

costas del pacífico. El descubrimiento fue hecho después de realizarse el arresto de cinco individuos sospechosos de haber secuestrado de un profesor universitario. Al descubrimiento de El Veladero le siguió otro similar pero más grande que se encontró en Acapulco a inicios de este año. En el mes de septiembre se descubrió otra narco fosa llamada Piedra del Chivo localizada cerca de Costa Azul un distrito

popular con los turistas. Ahí se encontraron 31 víctimas de los cuales dos eran mujeres.

Mientras las autoridades desenterraban estos esqueletos, la Barbie, causó un escándalo al dar conocer en los medios de comunicación nacionales que el Presidente Calderón, había intentado realizar un pacto entre los carteles y que las autoridades federales estaban corrompidas por el narco. En una carta entregada al periódico Reforma y a El Paso Times, Valdez declara que él fue arrestado bajo los cargos de homicidio porque se rehusó a firmar el pacto que se negoció en el año 2010. Valdez, dijo que Calderón nombró al General Mario Arturo Acosta Chaparro, quien por cierto dirigió la guerra sucia en contra de la guerrilla en los años setentas, como su representante. Acosta Chaparro estuvo en la cárcel muchos años acusado de estar coludido con el Cartel de Juárez, aunque posteriormente fue declarado inocente de todos los cargos y recibió honores militares. El fue asesinado a plena luz del día en las calles de la ciudad de México en abril de este año. El legendario general ya había sobrevivido a un intento de asesinato en el año 2010.

La Barbie implicó también al entonces secretario de gobernación Juan Camilo Mourino, quien fuera asesinado junto con José Luis Santiago Vasconcelos jefe de la unidad antidrogas en un extraño accidente aviación en el año 2008, es decir durante las negociaciones del supuesto pacto con el narco. "La Barbie" dio a conocer posteriormente que Genaro García Luna, jefe de la policía federal y aliado clave de los Estados Unidos en la lucha contra las drogas recibía dinero de los narcotraficantes. La Barbie quien formó su cartel después de la muerte de Arturo Beltrán Leyva, implicó a otros funcionarios que también recibían dinero de manos del narco, incluyendo Facundo Rosas, policía federal quien sirviera como encargado de la campaña para pacificar el crimen en Ciudad Juárez. "Los funcionarios públicos que he mencionado son también parte de la estructura criminal de este país" mencionó por último La Barbie.

La administración de Calderón rápidamente desmintió lo dicho por Valdez, diciendo que las declaraciones del

prisionero fueron hechas para manchar oficiales y ganar un trato favorable en prisión. En una conferencia de prensa en la que no se permitió preguntas el vocero de la policía federal José Ramón Salinas leyó un comunicado que decía que Valdez tenía el objetivo de inhibir la acción oficial en contra de los criminales que el gobierno ha venido combatiendo. Valdez enfrenta la extradición a los Estados Unidos por cargos relacionados al narcotráfico.

En los días finales del gobierno de Calderón se ha renovado la atención sobre el costo humano de la llamada Guerra contra las drogas que se incrementó después de que el tomará la presidencia en diciembre del 2006. Zeta, el periódico de Tijuana publicó un análisis de sus reporteros basado en las cifras del INEGI. Organizaciones gubernamentales y sociedades civiles. Después de analizar la información concluyó que el 72 por ciento de los 114,158 homicidios o sea 83,000 personas fueron asesinados de una manera consistente como lo hace el crimen organizado. Esto de diciembre 1, 2006 a Octubre 31, 2012. También se demostró como Ciudad Juárez sufrió en forma desproporcionada de este fenómeno. Un artículo del diario de Juárez reportó 10,500 homicidios de diciembre 1, 2006 a Noviembre 25, 2012. Por otro lado Melly Molloy de la Universidad Estatal de Nuevo México contó 11,179 víctimas durante el mismo periodo de tiempo. Ciudad Juárez solo cuenta con el 1 por ciento de la población de México.

ZETA mencionó que cerca de 36,413 víctimas a nivel nacional permanecen sin ser identificadas. Por si la violencia de los últimos seis años no fuera suficiente, la matanza sigue. En noviembre 28 de este año, dos docenas de víctimas de la violencia criminal fueron reportadas en el país. Las escenas del crimen son fácilmente predecibles: Gómez Palacio, Durango, Torreón, Coahuila, Acapulco, los límites entre Jalisco y Zacatecas, Chihuahua. Entre las víctimas se encuentra Juventina Villa Mojica y su hijo Reynaldo Santana Villa. Sus muertes fueron anunciadas ya que ella era muy conocida en La Laguna donde se da una guerra entre los habitantes del lugar en contra de los carteles y los contrabandistas de madera. Esa área ha sido conocida por ser base de guerrillas y grupos paramilitares. El año pasado los residentes salieron de esa zona después de que Villa y Santana fueran atacadas en pleno día a pesar de la vigilancia de 25 policías estatales que estaba asignados para su seguridad. Hasta el momento nueve miembros de la familia Santana Villa han fallecido víctimas de la violencia. Este es el macabro mensaje y herencia de las organizaciones criminales que se han coludido con algunas autoridades dice Javier Monroy Hernández, coordinador de la organización de Desarrollo Comunitario de Chilpancingo. Dice que la protección de los recursos naturales y las personas de estas comunidades no está entre las metas de malos gobernantes coludidos con los criminales. Este es el panorama al momento de que Enrique Peña Nieto tomará posesión como presidente después de haber estado en la Casa Blanca con el presidente Barack Obama.

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# California Same-Sex Couples Anxiously Await Supreme Court Decision

By Elena Shore - NAM

When Tran Le and Terrenz Vong marched in the Los Angeles Gay Pride Parade, their photo appeared on the second page of the Sing Tao Daily. The couple said their appearance in Los Angeles' largest Chinese-language newspaper sent a clear message to their families and their communities.

"One of the biggest misconceptions [in Asian Pacific Islander communities] is that they don't see other couples like us in the media," said Le, a 21-year-old Vietnamese American. Vong, her partner, is a 24-year-old Chinese American. "When we marched in the parade, people who looked like my grandmother and my aunt stopped us to take a picture."

Appearing in Asian-American media outlets, Le said, "creates a sense of normalcy in society."

Le and Vong, who spoke Tuesday

## Lockeford lights up after 30 years



Historic downtown Lockeford has decorations for the holidays for the first time in over thirty years. Most Lockeford business owners have chipped in to make sure that there is a feeling of the holiday spirit as you pass through their historic town. The decorations consist of a 40 foot lighted skyline with a snow flake, and many of the buildings have put up lights and decorations on their rooftops.

On Saturday December 15, most of Lockeford's businesses will be open late for holiday shopping, and a lighted night time stroll for everybody to enjoy. Lockeford is best known for the famous sausages at Lockeford Meats, a variety of antique stores, hardware and groceries, and some tasty restaurants, all of whom will be open and participating in this holiday event. Many businesses will be having raffles, give-a-ways, and treats for the kids.

Even though many of the businesses in Lockeford are struggling due to the tough economic times they have contributed financially to pay for the downtown decorations. Cal Trans and San Joaquin County officials were very helpful with the permitting and regulations to make it possible to put up the holiday decorations, and also excited to have the Lockeford community creating holiday festivities with in their community. Special thanks go out to Blair Reese from Reese's Installation for who donated his time and knowledge physically putting up the downtown decoration and also donation lights.

So, make sure that at some point this holiday season to travel to North-East San Joaquin County to the community of Lockeford and share in their holiday spirit.

on a telebriefing organized by New America Media and the California-based Breakthrough Coalition, are among tens of thousands of same-sex couples in California anxiously awaiting news this week of whether they will have the right to marry.

### Two Key Cases Before the Supreme Court

The U.S. Supreme Court is expected to announce on Friday, Dec. 7 whether it will review two major cases related to marriage equality.

One is a challenge to the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), the federal statute that denies same-sex couples the same federal benefits and protections that heterosexual married couples receive. Married same-sex couples, for example, can't file joint taxes, access surviving spouse benefits under Social Security, or apply for a green card through a U.S.-citizen partner.

The second case the Supreme Court could decide to review is a challenge to the Ninth Circuit Court's decision on California's Prop 8. The Ninth Circuit



Terrenz Vong and Tran Le march in the 2012 Golden Dragon Chinese Lunar New Year parade in Chinatown, Los Angeles.

Court ruled earlier this year that Prop 8, the 2008 voter-approved initiative to ban same-sex marriage in the state, was unconstitutional.

If the Supreme Court decides not to review the Prop 8 case, the Ninth Circuit Court's decision will stand, and same-sex couples in California will soon be able to marry again.

If the Supreme Court decides to

review one or both cases, their decision is not expected until next June. (They could also decide to review DOMA now, and delay their decision on whether to take up Prop 8.) The court has already delayed announcing its decision several times.

"We've been up waiting for the results of the decision every Friday and

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# Same-Sex

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Monday," said Renata Moreira, the director of policy and communication at Our Family Coalition in San Francisco. She and her partner Lori Bilella are planning to get married in New York on their fifth anniversary next September. But they will marry sooner in California if they can.

Christopher Stoll, senior staff attorney at the National Center for Lesbian Rights, said the "worst-case scenario" for same-sex couples like Moreira and her partner would be if the Supreme Court "upholds DOMA and Prop 8 and says same-sex couples don't have a constitutional right to marry."

He doesn't think that's a likely scenario, but if it happens, Stoll said, "That would leave us in a situation where we have to spend many years getting back into the courts to get it overturned."

## A 'Sea Change' in Support For Same-Sex Marriage

A lot has changed since California voters approved Prop 8 four years ago.

This year, voters in Maine, Maryland, and Washington state approved same-sex marriage, marking the first time marriage rights have been extended to same-sex couples by popular vote.

"Across the board, a majority of voters now support same-sex marriage," said Amy Simon, a pollster and communications strategist at Goodwin Simon Strategic Research. Simon describes the shift as a "sea

change over time," a "relatively rapid" and "steady" increase of support for marriage equality.

In 2003, only 37 percent of U.S. adults supported same-sex marriage. By 2009 and 2010, polls showed roughly equal numbers for and against. Since then, a majority of the U.S. population has come around in support of same-sex marriage.

Fifty-one percent of adults now support marriage equality, compared to 47 percent who oppose it, according to a national ABC News/Washington Post poll released in November 2012.

"It's not just that young people who are more supportive ... are a larger part of the population," Simon said. Support for marriage equality has grown among all groups, she explained — youth, adults, senior citizens, African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, whites — in all regions of the country.

Currently, 51 percent of Anglos, 43 percent of African Americans and 53 percent of Latinos support marriage equality, according to the ABC News/Washington Post poll. Although the sample of Asian American-Pacific Islanders wasn't large enough to be statistically significant, other polls show that the numbers of API voters who support marriage equality is roughly the same as Latinos.

As more Latinos and Asian Americans support marriage equality, Simon added, they could become a key swing

vote on the issue.

And while African Americans in general have lower levels of acceptance of same-sex marriage than other groups, much of this is related to religiosity, according to Simon. Support for same-sex marriage among those African Americans who attend church less regularly or not at all is higher, she says.

Rev. Roland Stringfellow, director of Ministerial Outreach at the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and the Ministry at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, Calif., said he personally knows "many pastors and rabbis" willing to marry and recognize same sex couples.

He added that Obama's announcement that he supports same-sex marriage swayed many African Americans.

"As President Obama stated, he did not want to be on the wrong side of history," said Stringfellow, and many people may feel the same way.

## The Power of Messaging

One of the factors driving this shift in public opinion could be that marriage equality supporters have found "much more powerful and effective" ways to communicate their message, Simon said.

Proponents of marriage equality are using a variety of messaging strategies to make their case.

They are appealing to people's sense of shared humanity by focusing on the idea that "we are all God's children" and using families to tell stories of same-sex couples.

They are using "unexpected messengers" such as clergy, Republicans,

older heterosexual couples, Catholics, African-American ministers, Latino and API leaders. "That catches people's attention," Simon explained, "because they think, 'If that person is for it, and I'm uncomfortable with it, maybe I should think about that.'"

They are encouraging people who have changed their minds on the issue to act as spokespeople, telling the story of their journey through personal conflict as they went from being uncomfortable with the idea of same-sex marriage to becoming comfortable with it.

Finally, supporters of same-sex marriage are emphasizing protections for religious freedoms, making it clear that issuing marriage certificates is a government issue -- and that churches can still decide who they do and don't want to marry in their church.

"That distinction was important for the African-American vote in Maryland," Simon noted, when voters approved same-sex marriage in November.

In one ad, for example, African-American Reverend Donté Hickman of the Southern Baptist Church said he was in favor of Question 6, the Maryland same-sex marriage measure, because it protected religious freedom. "I support this law," he said, "because it doesn't force any church to perform a same-sex marriage if it's against their beliefs."

For Le, the child of refugees from Vietnam, marriage rights are the next logical step in gaining access to the American dream.

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# Illegal immigration drops after decade-long rise



Legislation addresses path to citizenship for young illegal immigrants

New census data released Thursday affirm a clear and sustained drop in illegal immigration, ending more than a decade of increases.

The number of illegal immigrants in the U.S. dropped to an estimated 11.1 million last year from a peak of 12 million in 2007, part of an overall waning of Hispanic immigration. For the first time since 1910, Hispanic immigration last year was topped by immigrants from Asia.

Demographers say illegal Hispanic immigration — 80 percent of all illegal immigration comes from Mexico and Latin America — isn't likely to approach its mid-2000 peak again, due in part to a weakened U.S. economy and stronger enforcement but also a graying of the Mexican population.

The finding suggests an uphill battle for the Republicans, who passed legislation in the House last week that would extend citizenship to a limited pool of

foreign students with advanced degrees but who are sharply divided on whether to pursue broader immigration measures.

In all, the biggest surge of immigration in modern U.S. history ultimately may be recorded as occurring in the mid-1990s to early 2000s, yielding illegal residents who now have been settled in the U.S. for 10 years or more. They include

migrants who arrived here as teens and are increasingly at risk of "aging out" of congressional proposals such as the DREAM Act that offer a pathway to citizenship for younger adults.

"The priority now is to push a vigorous debate about the undocumented people already here," said Jose Antonio Vargas, 31, a journalist from the Philippines.

"We want to become citizens and not face the threat of deportation or be treated as second class," said Vargas, whose campaign, Define American, along with the young immigrant group

United We Dream, have been pushing for citizenship for the entire illegal population in the U.S. The groups point to a strong Latino and Asian-American turnout for President Barack Obama in last month's election as evidence of public support for a broad overhaul of U.S. immigration laws.

Earlier this year, Obama extended to many younger immigrants temporary reprieves from deportation. But Vargas, who has lived in the U.S. since 1993 and appeared this year on the cover of Time magazine with other immigrants who lacked legal status, has become too old to qualify.

"This conversation is a question about how we as a nation define who is an American," Vargas said, noting that if politicians don't embrace immigration overhaul now, a rapidly growing bloc of minority voters may soon do it for them. "If you want us to pay a fine to become a citizen, OK. If you want us to pay back taxes, absolutely. If you want us to speak English, I speak English. But we can't tread water on this issue anymore."

Jeffrey Passel, a senior demographer at the Pew Research Center and a former Census Bureau official, said U.S. immigration policies will have a significant im-

act in shaping a future U.S. labor force, which is projected to shrink by 2030. Aging white baby boomers, many in specialized or management roles, are beginning to retire. Mexican immigration, which has helped fill needs in farming, home health care and other low-wage U.S. jobs, has leveled off.

"Immigration is one way to boost the number of workers in the population," he said, but the next wave of needed immigrants is likely to come from somewhere other than Mexico. "We are not going to see a return to the levels of Mexican unauthorized immigration of a decade ago."

The immigration shift may have an impact on the future racial and ethnic makeup of the U.S., pushing back official government estimates as to when whites will no longer be a majority in the country. The Census Bureau originally reported in 2008 that white children would become a minority in 2023 and the overall white population would follow in 2042. But the agency has since suggested the tipping points may arrive later, due to a slowdown in mostly Hispanic immigration. New census projections will be released next week.

It all depends "on the availability of

See **Immigration** Page 10

## Aviso de Audiencia Pública Consejo de Gobiernos de San Joaquín Revisión de la Certificación General

Una audiencia pública para recibir comentarios en cómo mejorar el Proceso de Planeación de Transportación en la Región está programada para el día Miércoles 5 de Diciembre del 2012.

La Administración Federal de Carreteras (FHWA) y la Administración Federal de Transito (FTA) conducirán la Revisión de la Certificación y Evaluación del Proceso de Planeación de la Transportación de la región realizada por el Consejo de Gobiernos (SJCOG) y sus afiliados. Cada cuatro años el FHWA y FTA en forma conjunta conducen esta revisión. Como parte de la revisión el público está invitado a comentar en el proceso de planeación a realizarse en la reunión pública el día:

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**Hora: 5:30 p.m. a 7:30 p.m.**

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Stockton, CA 95202**

Comentarios orales y escritos pueden presentaren en la reunión. Comentarios escritos también pueden enviarse por medio de email a [cert.review@fhwa.dot.gov](mailto:cert.review@fhwa.dot.gov) ó por medio de correo regular a:

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Federal Highway Administration  
650 Capitol Mall, Suite 4-100  
Sacramento, CA 95814

o

**Lorraine Lerman**

Federal Transit Administration  
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**Comentarios por escrito se recibirán hasta el día 5 de Enero del 2013.**

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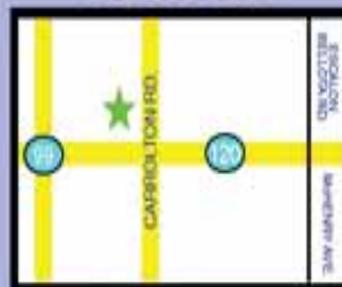
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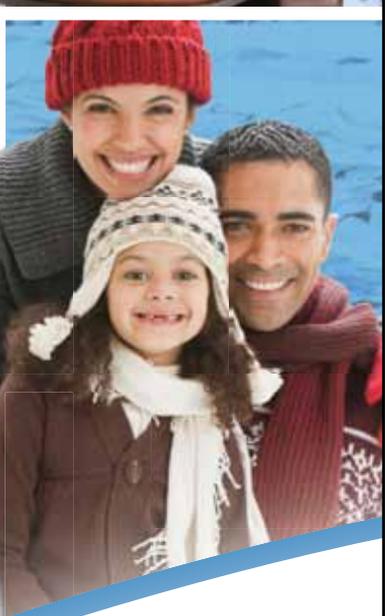
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# Immigration

continued from Page 7

jobs as well as changes in federal and state immigration policies," said Mark Mather, associate vice president of the Population Reference Bureau.

The immigration numbers are largely based on the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey through March 2011. Because the Census Bureau does not ask people about their immigration status, Passel derived estimates on illegal immigrants largely by subtracting the estimated legal immigrant population from the total foreign-born population. The numbers are also supplemented with material from Mather and William H. Frey of the Brookings Institution, who reviewed data released Thursday from the Census' American Community Survey.

The data showed that 11.1 million, or 28 percent, of the foreign-born population in the U.S. consists of illegal immigrants, virtually unchanged since 2009 and roughly equal to the level of 2005. An additional 12.2 million foreign-born people, 31 percent, are legal permanent residents with green cards. And 15.1 million, or 37 percent, are naturalized U.S. citizens.

Fewer Mexican workers are entering the U.S., while many of those immigrants already here are opting to return to their homeland, resulting in zero net migration from Mexico.

In 2007, legal and illegal immigrants made up equally large shares of the foreign-born population, at 31 percent, due to ballooning numbers of new unauthorized migrants seeking U.S. construction and related jobs during the mid-2000s housing boom. Naturalized U.S. citizens then repre-

sented 35 percent.

Broken down by geography and race, roughly half of all states last year posted declines or no change in their numbers of foreign-born Hispanics, including big immigrant states such as California and New York as well as economically hard hit areas in Arizona, Georgia and North Carolina, which previously had seen gains.

Foreign-born Asians were a bigger source of population gain than Hispanic immigrants in California, New York, Virginia, Illinois and New Jersey. Newly moving into suburban communities, the Asian population spread out more across the southeastern U.S. and Texas, increasing their share in 93 percent of the nation's metropolitan areas.

As a whole, foreign-born residents are slowly graying, with 44 percent now age 45 or older. They are more likely than in 2007 to be enrolled in college or graduate school (39 percent, up from 32 percent) and to be single (17 percent married, down from 22 percent).

Births to immigrant mothers also are on the decline, driving the overall U.S. birth rate last year to the lowest in records dating back to 1920.

"At least temporarily, the face of immigration to the U.S. is changing in terms of cultural background, education and skills," Frey said. "The fertility bump provided by past Hispanic immigrants may not be replicated in the future, especially if Asians take over a greater share of U.S. immigrants."

House Republicans, seeking to show they are serious about addressing the immigration issue after being largely re-

jected by Hispanics in the election, voted last week to make green cards accessible to foreign students graduating with advanced science and math degrees from U.S. universities.

The measure, strongly backed by the high-tech industry and touted as a boost to the U.S. economy, would have a net effect of extending more visas and eventual citizenship to students from India and China. It is opposed by most Democrats, the Obama administration and immigrant rights groups such as the Asian American Justice Center which want to see it packaged with broader legislation that extends legal status for illegal immigrants.

These groups also oppose the proposed new 55,000 visas for foreign students because they would be offset by eliminating a lottery program that provides green cards to people with lower rates of immigration, mainly those from Africa. Senate Democrats on Wednesday blocked Republicans from bringing up the bill.

A bill introduced by Sens. Jon Kyl of Arizona and Kay Bailey Hutchison of Texas, who are retiring at the end of this session, seeks to offer some legal status to young immigrants. Critics say it falls short because it does not provide a path to citizenship, an issue that Sen. Robert Menendez, D-N.J., describes as "non-negotiable."

About 77 percent of Hispanic voters in the November election said they thought people working in the U.S. illegally should be offered a chance to apply for legal status, according to exit polling conducted for the television networks and The Associated Press. That is compared with 71 percent of Asian-Americans and 65 percent of voters overall.

The political implications are great.

Hispanics and Asian-Americans are the nation's two fastest-growing population groups, each increasing by more than 40 percent since 2000. A higher birth rate and years of steadily high immigration have boosted Hispanics to 17 percent of the U.S. population, compared with blacks at 12 percent and 5 percent for Asians.

Even if the nation's estimated 11 million illegal residents do not attain citizenship, the nation's Hispanics, who made up roughly 10 percent of voters in November, are expected to nearly double their share of eligible voters by 2030. Asian-Americans, who now are 3 percent of voters, will also continue to increase.

About 73 percent of Asian-Americans voted for Obama, second only to African-Americans at 93 percent and slightly higher than Latinos at 71 percent, according to exit polling.

Asian-Americans don't strongly identify with either party, but they tend to cite jobs, education and health care as issues most important to them and generally prefer a big government that provides more services. Relatively new to the U.S. and religiously diverse, Asian-Americans also may have been repelled by Republican Mitt Romney's forceful stance during the primaries seeking "self-deportation" of immigrants as well as the GOP's sometimes narrow appeal to evangelical Christians, said Karthick Ramakrishnan, a political science professor at the University of California-Riverside who helps conduct a broad National Asian American Survey.

While Mexicans make up about 55 percent of illegal immigrants and other Latin Americans represent another 25 percent, Asians make up a 10 percent share, many of whom overstay temporary visas.

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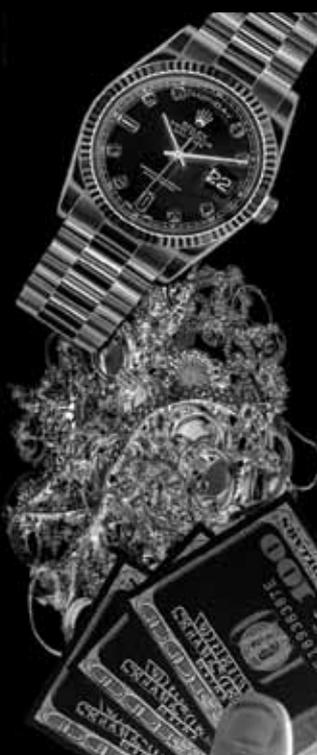
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# Program trains farmworkers to be organic farmers

By Gosia Wozniacka

SALINAS, Calif. - Bending over beds of shriveled strawberry plants former farmworker Domitila Martinez pulls pieces of black plastic row covers in preparation for next season's planting. Except this time, she's the boss.

Martinez, who escaped the civil war in El Salvador three decades ago, used to pack tomatoes and harvest grapes for long hours and little pay in Central California. Then, one day, she heard an announcement on the radio: She could become a grower herself.

She enrolled in a small farmer education program in Salinas that trains farmworkers to establish and manage organic farms. Today, she grows four acres of organic strawberries in the Salinas Valley and sells them to Whole Foods markets.

"I really like being out here working," Martinez said, "because I'm working for myself."

The Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association, known as ALBA, helps bring minority, low-income farmworkers into a profession long dominated by Anglos. Since the program started in 2001, it has created more than 80 small farm businesses.

With demand for locally grown and organic food skyrocketing, more people have become interested in farming in recent years, spurring a growth in farmer training programs.

But few programs focus on immigrants, especially Latinos, who historically have had difficulty making it as farmers because of language and cultural barriers, lack of resources, and lack of government support.

While the number of Hispanic farmers grew by 14 percent over the past five years, according to the 2007 Census of Agriculture, significantly outpacing the increase in U.S. farm operators overall,



Hispanic farmers comprise only 2.5 percent of all farm operators.

ALBA gives farmworkers, most of whom are first generation Latino immigrants, the opportunity to move up the job ladder, teaching them crop planning, production, marketing and distribution skills.

"A lot of farmworkers are working tirelessly to invest in their children's futures, but ALBA gives them the opportunity to improve their lives within their lifetime," said program manager Nathan Harkleroad.

Other programs include Oregon-based nonprofit Adelante Mujeres, which offers a 12 week Spanish-language sustainable farming class, as well as access to land, technical assistance and a farmers market; and the Center For Latino Farmers in Washington state, which conducts workshops, provides resources and other assistance.

At ALBA's 90-acre ranch in the Salinas Valley, an area known as "the Salad Bowl of the World," participants attend bi-weekly classes during six-months of intensive training. They learn about pests and planting, beneficial insects and cover crops. They meet with guest speakers ranging from local farmers to university biologists. They visit irrigation supply stores, compost suppliers, farms and farmers markets.

"The idea is that the participants know how to access things, and that they develop relationships," Harkleroad said.

This year, the program added a three-month apprenticeship during which participants grow and sell crops as a class. Aspiring farmers then present a business plan. They fill out food safety and organic certification

paperwork. And while most are farmworkers, a few spots are open to other aspiring farmers - the training is accredited by Hartnell College in Salinas.

ALBA also offers a farm incubator program, allowing newly minted farmers to lease the organization's farmland for up to six years - with access to tractors, equipment, irrigation and other support for a reduced fee.

And it runs a licensed wholesale distribution program called ALBA Organics, helping the new farmers with storage, marketing and distribution. It sells to stores and institutions such as Google, Trader Joe's, University of California at Santa Cruz, and Stanford University housing cooperatives. In fiscal year 2012, ALBA Organics brought in sales of \$4.5 million.

For Martinez, who graduated from the program a decade ago, assistance in finding land and the use of equipment proved crucial.

"This program gave me the ability to start farming on my own," said Martinez. "When you're starting out, you have no money for tractors or other things."

The 60-year old Martinez now employs four people during harvest season and others throughout the year - but still does the bulk of the labor herself.

She started out by selling her strawberries door to door, but later contracted with Whole Foods stores in the San Francisco Bay area and the central coast.

Farmworkers say ALBA's other benefits include reduced exposure to dangerous chemicals in the fields.

"We learn how to work with nature and how not to hurt the environment and the workers," said Andres Garcia Rico, who works in large scale agriculture and completed the training this fall with his wife. "There are so many people dying of cancer, getting sick because of pesticides."

Small scale farming also offers a break from the repetitive motions that farmworkers perform all day on conventional farms. ALBA farmers grow up to 60 varieties of fresh produce - so their work varies throughout the day.

And organic farming rubs off on the family's dietary habits, Rico said. His three daughters helped plant and harvest the vegetables this summer - and were more than happy to eat them for dinner.

As ALBA farmers promote and sell their organic produce to friends and at area farmers' markets, those benefits expand, Rico said, resulting in more Latinos turning to organics.

Perhaps the biggest benefit at ALBA is the sense of community. On a recent November morning at the sprawling ranch, families tilled and weeded their plots and children rode bicycles on dirt paths. The farmers, ranging from very experienced to those just starting out, greeted each other and exchanged advice.

This winter, about 50 will be farming at the ranch, including 16 new farmers. For most, Harkleroad said, it takes a few years to go into farming full time. Usually, two to three acres can generate a full time living.

In January, Rico and his wife will plant romaine lettuce and cauliflower, followed by an array of other vegetables.

"It's going to be a challenge, but we're doing it for us and for our children," Rico said. "Our dream is to have our own ranch someday."



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# Dear News, Opinion, Feature, Health and Lifestyle Editors:

We have a silent crisis in California of which our kids are helplessly vulnerable: mental illness. In California, more than one million children will be diagnosed with a mental illness this year, and 600,000 will not receive appropriate treatment.

In my capacity as the CEO of United Advocates for Children and Families (UACF), a statewide, non-profit focused exclusively on parents and families with children experiencing mental illness, I am proposing a free weekly column titled 'Let's Talk Mental Health' that informs, educates

and equips parents and families to recognize, understand and cope with mental illness in the school, juvenile justice and mental health systems. Your newspaper can become a vital channel of communication for families in your local community.

With the recent controversy over how voter-approved Proposition 63 mental health funding is being spent, there is no better time than now to begin education about mental illness and the enormous resources that are available, including the impact of public policy on households and families.

Many people are simply too afraid to come forward for fear of ridicule and discrimination for having a disease that is often and erroneously tied only to violence and "crazy" uncontrolled behavior. The myths of mental illness must be shattered, stigma eliminated and treatment forthcoming. I have embedded a sample introductory article below, and if you allow me this opportunity, I will send several more that I know will be of great interest to your readers. Each article will have a talk-back@uacf4hope.org feedback loop to encourage dialogue and discussion.

If you agree that this weekly column 'Let's Talk Mental Health' would be of interest to your readers, please reply. Together, let's make a difference!

Sincerely,  
Oscar Wright, Ph.D.  
CEO  
United Advocates for Children and Families (UACF)  
2035 Hurley Way, Suite 290  
Sacramento, CA 95825  
Ph. (916) 643-1530  
owright@uacf4hope.org  
www.uacf4hope.org

## Visionary receives grant funding

Visionary Home Builders of California is the recipient of a \$200,000 grant from Wells Fargo. A press conference will be held at 3:00pm on Tuesday, December 11th at Villa Monterey, one of the many multi-family housing units developed by Visionary Home Builders of California, Inc. Villa Monterey is located at 4707 Kentfield Road, Stockton, California. Representatives from Wells Fargo will make the presentation.

Wells Fargo & Company will donate \$6 million to share between 59 nonprofits through its 2012 Leading the Way Home Program Priority Markets Initiative. This initiative provides grant support for neighborhood stabilization projects that are located in areas designated for revitalization to stimu-

late growth, stability and investment in distressed areas.

"This grant is focused on stabilizing and rebuilding our local communities," said Alice Juarez, Wells Fargo District Manager in Stockton. "We're increasing our grant commitments to help even more efforts led by nonprofits to revitalize neighborhoods in cities that have been deeply affected by the challenging economy."

Visionary Home Builders will utilize the grant to support The Blueprint to Foreclosure Recovery Program that will create homebuyers within neighborhoods throughout San Joaquin County. The program provides education, counseling, and home buying assistance to households of low to moderate income.

## Sirviendo a las necesidades urgentes

Por Jennifer Torres

STOCKTON - En los primeros días de este mes, durante una tarde lluviosa, los pacientes llenaban la sala de espera en la clínica de emergencias del Dr. Rami Georgies y uno por uno fueron llamados para ser examinado y tratados. El Dr. Georgies, es un médico que completó su entrenamiento médico en el Hospital General de San Joaquín y abrió hace un año una clínica de servicios de emergencia en el 8001 Lorraine Ave., en Stockton para atender las necesidades de servicios de este tipo. La clínica abre diariamente de 9 a.m. a 9 p.m. y da servicio a los pacientes cuyas enfermedades ó heridas leves requieren de atención médica pero que no son lo suficientemente serias como para buscar atención en la sala de emergencias de un hospital. Georgies y sus colegas suturan heridas, tratan quemaduras así como torceduras, esguinces y fracturas menores. Ellos también están disponibles para administrar vacunas, exámenes médicos y pruebas de embarazo así como pacientes con un amplio rango de síntomas. Cuentan con servicio digital de Rayos X. El doctor Georgies nos dice "Somos rápidos eficientes y limpios" "Contamos con personal amigable y tratamos de manejar todo en la clínica"

La parte norte de Stockton en donde se localiza la clínica ha crecido rápidamente en los años recientes con la construcción de casas. Sin embargo, los servicios médicos no lo hicieron al mismo ritmo. Georgies comenta "Esta era una área en la cual el servicio no era suficiente." En la otra parte de la ciudad hay muchas oficinas medicas." El doctor Georgies ha trabajado como médico general dice que él prefiere atender el área de siempre impredecible de las emergencias médicas.

Nunca se puede anticipar que es lo que se va a presentar. Puedes ver todos los grupos de personas desde niños hasta adultos mayores, no sabes que es lo que se presentara en el siguiente cuarto. Es una mezcla de



todos. La clínica acepta la mayoría de seguros médicos y también nos esforzamos trabajando muy duro para atender a los pacientes que carecen de seguro medico. Dice que muchos pacientes vienen a esta clínica cuando necesitan ser examinados inmediatamente pero que su doctor no está disponible. La disponibilidad de este tipo de servicios es decir esta clínica de servicios de emergencia les ahorra el gasto y la dificultad por la que se atraviesa en la sala de emergencias de un hospital.

El doctor Georgies es originario de Siria e inmigro a Stockton en 1996 para cursar sus estudios de medicina. El y su esposa han vivido en esta comunidad desde ese año y la consideran su casa y entienden bien sus necesidades. La pareja tiene tres hijos que estudian a saber una niña y dos hombres. Les gusta pasar su tiempo libre en Stockton y sus alrededores. "Básicamente soy un hombre orientado a la familia nos comenta el doctor Georgie. Mi tiempo libre se lo dedico a la familia. Para más información de la clínica California Urgent Care, visite nuestro website [www.calurgent-care.com](http://www.calurgent-care.com) ó llame al (209) 472-7400

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# Deadline Approaches for Homeowners Seeking Foreclosure Reviews

By Anna Challet - NAM

Well over 4 million homeowners affected by the foreclosure crisis are eligible for an independent review of their cases – but only a small percentage of them have requested one through a recently available federal program, and the deadline to do so is looming.

The Independent Foreclosure Review (IFR) allows eligible current and former homeowners to have their foreclosure files reviewed by independent consultants. Homeowners who were financially harmed by abuses or errors of their mortgage servicers will be eligible for compensation.

As of September 2012, 18 percent of eligible homeowners in California had responded to the mailing about the IFR, which is run by the Federal Reserve Bank and the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC). Nationally, the response rate is only 7 percent. The deadline to request a review is December 31.

“The response rate has been incredibly low compared to the number of homeowners who may have been affected,” says Maeve Elise Brown, Executive Director of Housing and Economic Rights Advocates. She spoke at a briefing for ethnic media on Wednesday hosted by New America Media with support

from the San Francisco Foundation, intended to raise awareness about the IFR Program.

“There was almost no outreach to people of color or immigrants,” says Brown.

Lena Robinson, a regional manager of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, says that the IFR is particularly focused on increasing the number of African American and Asian American responders.

Mailings about the program were sent out in November 2011. Many homeowners were suspicious of the mailing and dismissed it as a mortgage scam.

Additionally, despite the Federal Reserve Bank's intention to reach out to Asian American homeowners, the mailings were only sent in English and Spanish (with a note about where to find other translations).

“Unfortunately, a lot of the information that's out there is not in Chinese [and other Asian languages],” says Allen Zhao, the Housing Coordinator at ASIAN, Inc.

Cheyenne Martinez-Boyette of the Mission Economic Development Agency (MEDA) adds that the foreclosure crisis “has impacted the Latino community disproportionately,” which he says repre-



sents almost 48 percent of all foreclosures.

Etelvina Reyes, a San Francisco Bay Area homeowner, had lost her job and was going through a divorce when she got behind on her mortgage payments. She first approached a third party that promised to help her modify her home loan with her bank. The effort ultimately failed, though she was still charged a fee. She then tried to get a loan modification directly through her lender, Citibank, which granted her a trial modification.

One day she went to the bank to make a mortgage payment. “They said, ‘Why are you paying the mortgage? You are no longer the owner.’ The bank was now the owner,” says Reyes. “That was the worst day of my life.”

Reyes was likely a victim of “dual-tracking” – a practice in which banks try to foreclose on homeowners before giving a decision on a loan modification. The practice is set to be outlawed in California next year. She went to MEDA for help, and the organization was able to assist her in rescinding the foreclosure.

Reyes recently requested a review through the IFR, and could be eligible for compensation if it's found that she was wrongfully foreclosed upon.

Any homeowner whose primary residence was at some stage of foreclosure any time in 2009 or 2010, and who used a mortgage servicer on the IFR's list of servicers and affiliates, is eligible for a review. Homeowners who did not actually lose their homes to foreclosure are still eligible to apply. Compensation ranging from \$500 to \$125,000 plus equity will be determined by how much the homeowner was financially harmed during the foreclosure process. In the most severe cases, says Robinson, the foreclosure can be rescinded.

Despite the fact that the IFR began accepting requests for review in November 2011, and 234,000 homeowners have already requested one, no decisions have been made and no compensation has been paid out. Robinson says that at this point, the program's main priority is

See **Foreclosure** page 14

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# Economic Outlook: Budget Talk Blues

By Anthony Hall

Budget talks in Washington are threatening to put stock markets on a short leash, much as painfully slow bail-out talks in Europe have in recent years.

It took so long for European leaders to agree on a program for bailing out Greece that by the time the first loans were approved the funds sent to Athens went to help a budget mess that nobody could recognize anymore.

Europe began assembling the second rescue program before the first was played out and studied, in part because the long delays had allowed the Greek economy to contract even further, such that few of the decimal points appeared to be in the right place anymore.

All those headlines that pronounced Germany willing to help were, by then, stretched so thin that Chancellor Angela Merkel's optimism was embarrassing the country's less optimistic finance minister. In time they began to sound like they came from different countries, let alone work in the same administration.

The White House has now issued a new report that warns the so-called "fiscal cliff," if it comes around, will be responsible for a 1.4 percent drop in the country's economic growth, which is hovering near 2 percent as it is.

After stock values took a sharp post-election dive, economists are now linking worries about the potential budget implosion to the health of retail during the holiday shopping season, which means concern has shifted to include consumers, as well as investors.

Of course, manufacturers are also looking over their shoulders, wondering if it is worth it to stick with production schedules, given gridlock in Washington threatens to cripple the economy.

It is not news the budget plan almost everybody fears is deemed an economic threat. But the Congressional Budget Office's numbers are slightly higher than previous predictions. At this point, the combined spending cuts and tax hikes in place are expected to send the unemployment rate to 9.1 percent by the end of



2013, The New York Times reported.

There are cloudy days and then there are rainy days. In between, there are dry days with thunder rumbling on the horizon. Investors, consumers and manufacturers like to know what to expect. In the meantime, the media is wondering if statements of cooperation made after the first meetings between Republicans and the White House after the election can stretch

to week three without any holes appearing.

There's a humorous sentiment that goes, "Don't vote -- it only encourages them." In this vein, even negative press is press of some kind and the people who go into delirium tremens without seeing their names in the newspaper for two days might best serve their collective mission if the press would just pay attention to something else.

Someone is feeding on negative press -- voraciously, apparently.

In international markets Monday, the Nikkei 225 index in Japan added 1.8 percent while the Shanghai composite index in China fell 0.49 percent. The Hang Seng index in Hong Kong rose 0.55 percent while the Sensex in India added 0.16 percent.

The S&P/ASX 200 in Australia gained 0.25 percent.

In midday trading in Europe, the FTSE 100 index in Britain shed 0.52 percent while the DAX 30 in Germany lost 0.28 percent. The CAC 40 in France slipped 0.75 percent while the Stoxx Europe 600 gave up 0.48 percent.

## Foreclosure

continued from Page 13

to "get a sense of the range of issues that homeowners may have faced."

No money will be released until the application process is closed, and regulators won't give a time frame. Maeve Elise Brown says that it's not clear how obvious the financial harm will have to be in or-

der for a homeowner to be compensated.

Brown says that there have also been significant problems with the process in terms of who was hired to review the files. An investigation has revealed ties between the banks and the independent consultants they have hired to review the

foreclosure files. The process will "require ongoing oversight by the public," according to Brown.

Robinson of the Federal Reserve Bank maintains, though, that this is homeowners' opportunity to "close the chapter on that part of their lives."

On December 10, the Mission Economic Development Agency will hold a workshop to help eligible homeowners submit a request to the IFR online. Span-

ish language translators will be available. Applicants should have their loan number, the last four digits of their Social Security number, and any documentation that would substantiate financial harm during the foreclosure process. 2301 Mission Street, Suite 301, San Francisco. 6-8 PM.

Homeowners who did not receive the IRF form can call 1-888-952-9105 or apply online: [www.independentforeclosurereview.com](http://www.independentforeclosurereview.com)

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# Returning Migrant Children Pose Educational Challenge in Mexico

Kent Paterson - NAM

In different migrant-sending regions of Mexico, educators are coping with the new challenge of teaching children of return migrants who speak little or no Spanish. In the north-central state of Zacatecas, for instance, 150 teachers began a crash course this month in English to help them communicate with new students coming from the United States.

Sponsored by the state education department, the class will consist of 60 hours of Saturday sessions, video-conferences and field work. Antonio Jacobo de Luna, Zacatecas under-secretary for educational planning and support, said the new teacher program is addressing the concerns of U.S.-based migrant clubs from Zacatecas that got in touch with state officials about the presence of young, primarily English

speakers suddenly thrust into a Spanish-language learning environment.

Dozens of such children are said to be in a language-challenged situation after relocating with their families to Zacatecas. The English course will be offered to educators at 54 schools in the municipalities of Tlaltenango, Jalpa, Jerez, Fresnillo, Rio Grande, Guadalupe, and Zacatecas. As an aid to students, the state education department has also given some pupils free bilingual Spanish-English textbooks.

In the southwestern state of Michoacan, educational authorities are also working on the issue of migrant family students from the U.S. Through two programs, Binational Migrant and Basic Education without Borders, the Michoacan state education department is conducting workshops in the municipalities of Tacambaro and Pedernales that are designed to ease the stress of a



new school system and temper cultural shocks experienced by students.

In addition to language problems, new students also confront problems in having their U.S. studies properly accredited. To help parents overcome bureaucratic hurdles, the Binational Migrant initiative maintains an office in the state capital of Morelia.

A dozen children have been identified as needing special language and credit transfer assistance needs in

Tacambaro and Pedernales. Michoacan education officials are likewise focusing on the emerging issue in other zones of a state which has long been at the forefront of the historic migration from Mexico to the U.S. and now back again, to some extent.

The local educational system began to grapple with a growing pedagogical challenge after economic crisis and U.S. immigration policies pushed more people back to Michoacan.

# US Consumer Confidence Hits Highest Level in 4 Years

US consumer confidence in November reached its highest level since February 2008, rising to 73.7 from a revised estimate of 73.1, the New York-based Conference Board said Tuesday.

Lynn Franco, director of economic indicators at the Conference Board, said consumers over the past few months have become more upbeat about the job market. This turnaround in sentiment is

helping to boost confidence.

"This month's moderate improvement was the result of an uptick in expectations, while consumers' assessment of present-day conditions continues to hold steady," Franco said in a news release posted at the Conference Board's website.

The 73.7 level puts the consumer confidence index at its high-

est level in more than four and a half years and indicates that US household spending will continue to grow.

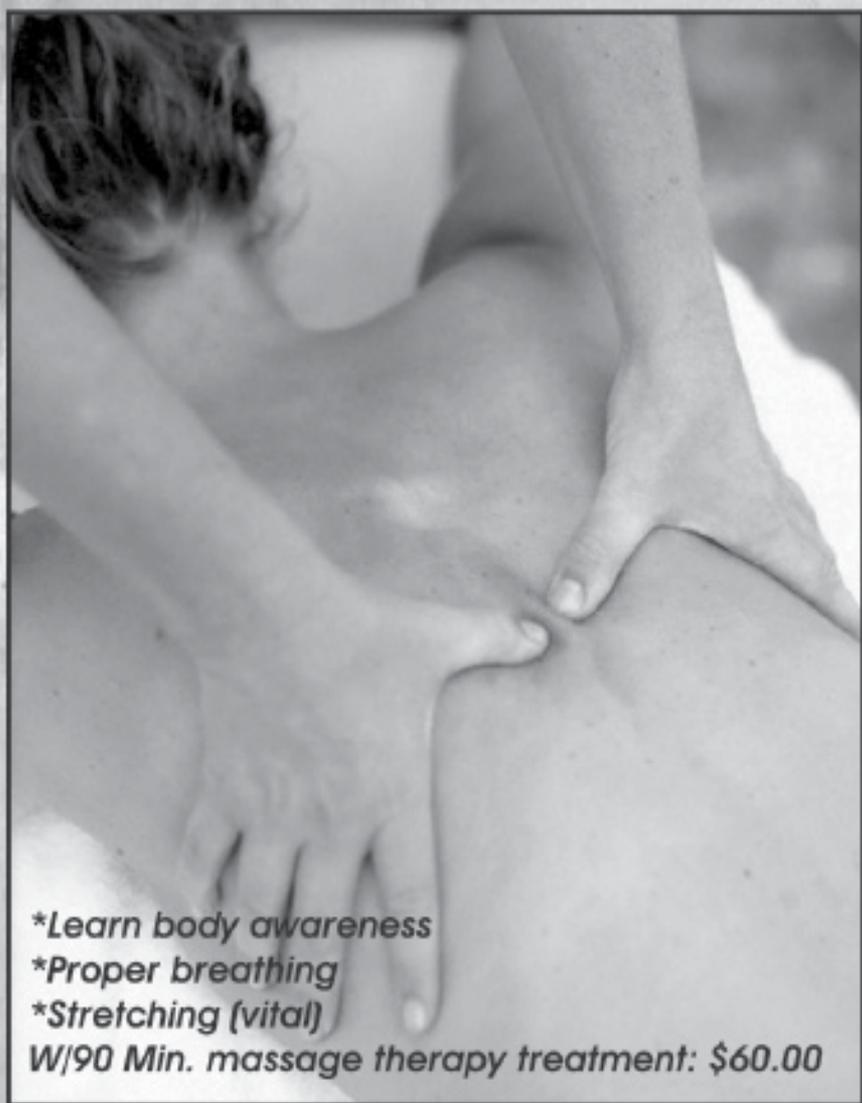
The Conference Board also reported that consumers who answered that business conditions are "good" declined to 14.4 per cent from 16.5 per cent, while those saying business conditions are "bad" decreased to

31.5 per cent from 33.0 per cent.

Consumers' assessment of the labor market improved, with those saying jobs are "plentiful" increased to 11.2 per cent from 10.4 per cent, while those claiming jobs are "hard to get" held steady at 38.8 per cent.

The figures are based on a monthly survey of consumers conducted by the pollster Nielsen.

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