

# commentary

from other pens...

## Mexican immigrants enjoy new status

By George Gedda

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — California voters clearly were fed up with the illegal Mexican immigrants in their midst in November 1994. They overwhelmingly approved a ballot measure to punish them and other undocumented aliens by denying social services. Predictably there were civil rights protests.

It is not clear how much California was a microcosm of public sentiment. But seven years later, Mexican immigrants suddenly are riding high, their cause backed by the White House, many in Congress, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, labor unions and their own government. Secretary of State Colin Powell praises the contribution of Mexican aliens to the U.S. economy and says he wants "safe, legal, orderly and dignified" procedures to ensure they receive humane treatment.

Attitudes toward Mexican immigrants have come a long way from the days when they were blamed for overcrowding of schools, straining social services and taking jobs away from U.S. citizens.

"Even with current economic stall, we're living in a period of unprecedented prosperity, and it's increasingly clear that immigrants have contributed to that," says Doris Meissner, who headed the U.S. immigration service under President Clinton.

George Grayson, a Mexico expert at William and Mary College, says another turning point occurred when Republicans started worrying about losing the increasingly powerful Hispanic vote to the Democrats. At that point, he says, "The Republican Party did a U-turn."

In 1995, when Republicans opposed immigration, both in California politics and in Congress, polls showed opposition to immigration ran 2-to-1 over the number who wanted to keep it where it is or increase it.

Now, the polls indicate people are about evenly split between keeping immigration where it is now and decreasing it.

Mexican President Vicente Fox is a strong advocate of legalizing 3 million to 4 million Mexican illegals. He is expected to discuss the issue with President Bush during a Sept. 5 state visit to Washington.

The Bush administration clearly is interested in changing the present system but has ruled out a mass amnesty.

One reason is powerful opposition in certain Republican precincts. Sen. Phil Gramm, R-Texas, has said legalization of undocumented workers would have to pass "over my cold, dead political body."

Gramm sees illegal migrants as lawbreakers. That may be true, but the administration sees them as workers. It is considering proposals to allow some to earn legal status through the grant of work permits and eventually "green cards" symbolizing permanent residency under specified conditions. Thus far, the administration has been silent about numbers.

Also under discussion is expansion of a program that allows Mexicans to migrate legally for specified periods as guest workers.

Aside from Mexico itself, the most enthusiastic response to Bush's accommodating attitude toward immigrants has come from Democrats, many of whom want legalization not only for Mexicans but for immigrants of all nationalities.

Dan Stein, of the Federation for American Immigration Reform, which favors low migration levels, thinks the Bush strategy could hurt Republicans.

"Republicans should be broadening their base among mainstream constituencies," he said. "They sometimes act as if immigrants are the only thing they have to worry about."

Given the competing voices, Powell says there is no chance of a detailed agreement being ready for signature during Fox's visit in two weeks.

"We are in no hurry," he said. "We have to do this right. We have to do this in a careful way, a way that will be seen as fair and equitable by both nations."

**EDITOR'S NOTE** — George Gedda has covered foreign affairs for The Associated Press since 1968.

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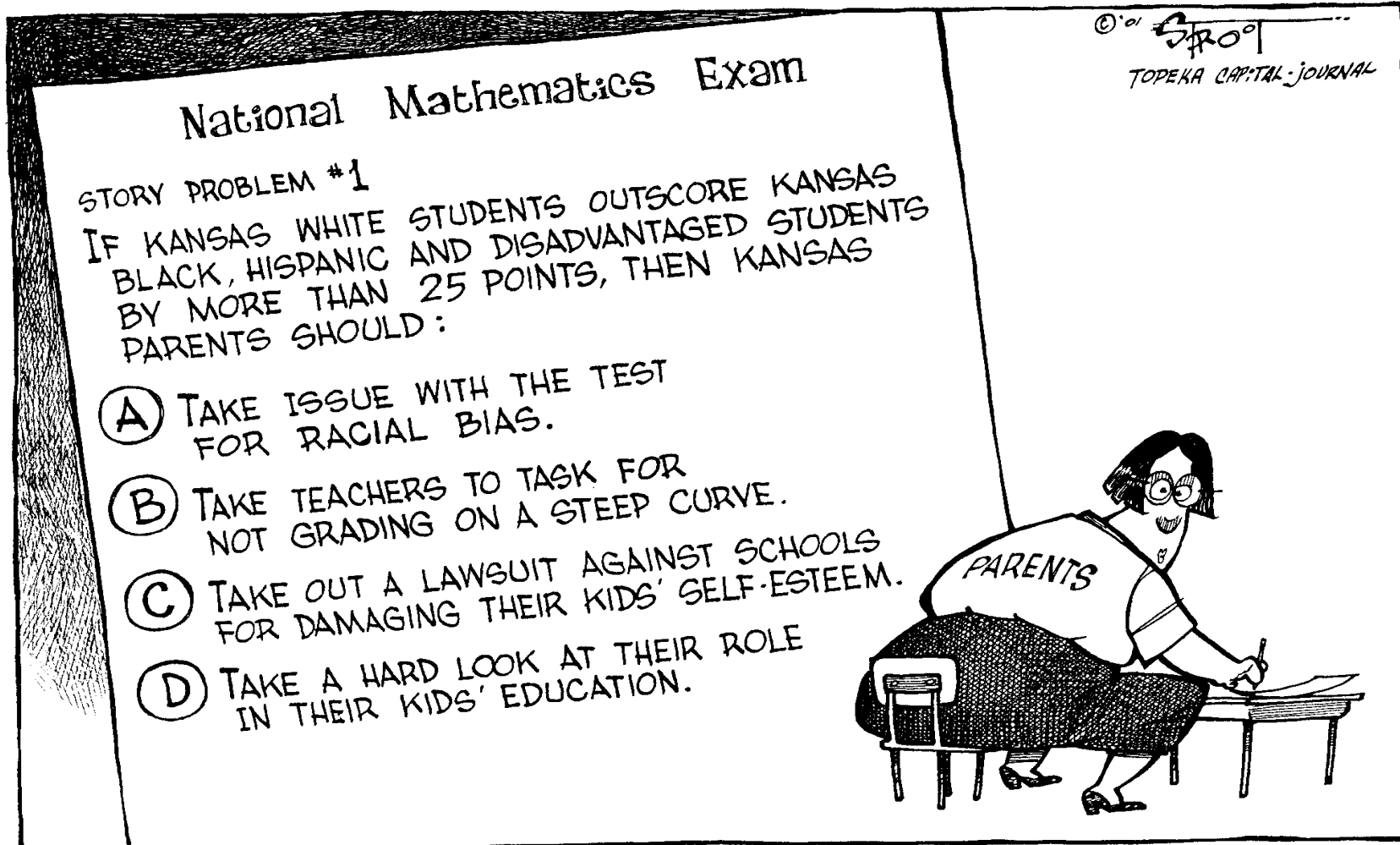
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## Kids try to get adults to pay attention

Kids these days. It never fails. Each younger generation is never considered good enough by preceding wiser generations. Today, adults look down at teens because they are seen as being lazy and disrespectful.

I hear what really is missing today is parents taking care of their children and teaching them right and wrong. Maybe the communists in China have it figured out.

The students, or children, protesting in Tiananmen Square during April, May and June 1989 had one main purpose: get the communist adults in China to recognize their demands for a more democratic government. The children didn't want to overthrow the government; in fact, they often expressed their faithfulness to communism by singing the communist anthem, and by solemnly respecting the Chinese flag during ceremonies.

What they did want was a change in the current system. The young, inexperienced, and idealistic children actually believed life, liberty and happiness were not just words, but essentials for a successful life. The children presented a scroll to government officials that included seven demands, including: freedom of the press, more funds for education, and financial disclosures by Party and government leaders. These basic demands showed the children yearned for true democracy, and were practical in that they knew they could not actually overthrow the government.

Thank goodness the adults in China didn't accept the scroll. Those poor misled children actually thought those three American ideas were keys



**mitch  
hixson**

• the soundgarden

to a better life. The children needed some educated adults to advise them. Thank goodness the adults in the Beijing community cared enough about their kids to re-educate them. Where would the dim-witted children be otherwise?

During the democracy demonstrations, Tiananmen Square was a place of misguided hope. The children saw their protests as pushing their motherland toward a new day, they believed would be better than the status quo. Children do similar things in America today, when they are having sit-ins protesting too much salt in school food, that Smokey the Bear should be banned because he makes bears look abnormally fat, or rising prices for adult beverages at a local watering hole.

Caught up in this excitement were the ten million citizens of Beijing, who supported the children with cheers, supplies, and even their bodies. During the demonstrations, the children and citizens were remarkably calm, brave and even friendly toward the military. On May 20, 1989, the adults of the communist government decided to give their feeble-minded children another life lesson. This lesson was called martial law. Thousands of troops poured in from all around Beijing to forcibly clear the square. But instead of conceding defeat and

going back to their studies, demonstrators laid down in front of tanks, and began lecturing soldiers on the student movement, as if they were the educated ones and the government was the naive, and uneducated mass. I'm sure the communist leaders all said in unison, "Kids these days."

However, now the adults were beginning to tire of their children's insolence. Instead of trying to have a talk with their children, like adults do so well, the communist government decided to put their kids on restriction. Beginning on the evening of June 3, 1989, the People's Liberation Army swept down on Beijing like a flashflood. Trigger-happy soldiers of the Red Army recklessly fired their AK-47s at the now fleeing children, who needed to be liberated from their crazy dreams of life, liberty, and pursuing happiness. The Red Army fired upon anything that moved for days following. Even so, the children showed incredible courage by risking their lives, liberty and happiness to try to change the harsh policies of the adult leaders of their country.

While surrounded by troops in the early morning hours on June 4, 1989, a group of frightened children defiantly sang their communist party song. The morning after, once the square had been cleared of child disruptors, a unit of Red Army soldiers fired a volley of bullets into a fleeing crowd. The crowd bravely returned still under fire to attempt to recover their wounded friends.

Even after all hope had been lost that Tiananmen could be their holy land, the children of China, the children of the democracy movement valiantly defied the army.

Kids these days.

## It's in the cards



**red  
green**

• north of forty

As my wife and I approach our 35th anniversary, it occurs to me that marriage is a lot like a really long game of poker. Some days you have the cards, some days you don't. You need to learn how to be a good loser and occasionally how to be a gracious winner. Mainly you need to know how to bluff, when to press your luck, and when to head for the hills. Just like in the Kenny Rogers song. Although, after five or six marriages, he's obviously better at foldin' 'em than he is at holdin' 'em. But the main objective is to keep putting your ante in there every hand, every day. It is just a game, after all, and things will get better. A full house usually starts with just a pair. So hang in there. Play the hand you're dealt. You know that she's ultimately going to win the pot, but if you play your cards right, she may buy you something frilly.

### FASHION STATEMENTS

I saw a hospital nurse crossing the street the other day. She had the hospital greens on. It struck me as a great idea to have simple colored clothes that denote a person's profession. I think all doctors and nurses should wear them all the time. That way, when anyone's hurt, you just look around for somebody in a green suit. And then we could expand it to other professions — police always wear blue, engineers wear orange, firefighters wear red, lawyers wear yellow, plumbers wear ... well, you get the idea.

Maybe we could even have shades. The darker the color, the better you are at your profession. We'd know this guy was a poor doctor by his pastel green pants. Or he could be a Florida condo owner.

It would also help town planners. You could have a town hall meeting and look out over the crowd

to see what color's missing. Then you'd know what your town needs — more dentists, more hairdressers, or just something purple.

And it would help you in the area of personal interaction because you'd already know something about the individual. The color of a person's clothes would instantly tell you what they do and, to a certain extent, what they stand for.

Politicians would wear plaid.

### MIDDLE-AGED REGRETS

I thought I'd list a few of my regrets now, rather than wait until I get older and find them forgettable:

- Not getting an education.
- Getting the wrong education.
- Entering the 40-Plus Racquetball Tournament.
- The mesh T-shirt.
- Taking a bad job.
- Quitting a bad job.
- Being rehired for a bad job.
- Being fired from a bad job.
- Wearing a Speedo when you're a Lardo.

### TOO OLD TO FOOL

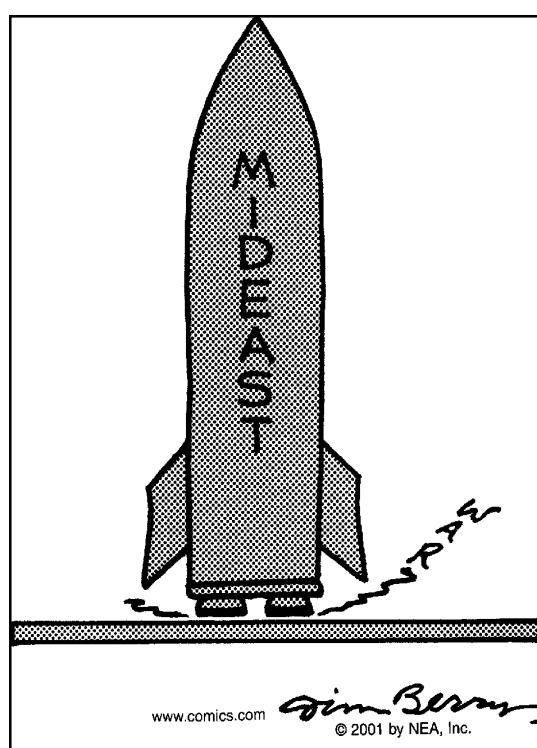
I meet a lot of seniors on a regular basis. It's not that I go out of my way to do that, it's just that there are so darned many of them, and they are generally hanging around waiting for people like me to come close enough to be exposed to a variety of heavily biased theories presented as proven fact.

But the big thing that strikes me is that as we get older, we seem to lose our need to acquire things. These people don't have fancy, new cars; big, impressive homes or speedboats; home theaters; or a personal trainer. I figure they've stopped buying things because they've had so many disappointing consumer experiences that they can no longer build their expectations to the necessary level. They know that no matter what the ad says, the product is, at some level, going to suck. That's a sad day. Making crazy purchases based on wild promises and blind hope is an essential element in any capitalist economy. No wonder advertisers are more interested in the young consumers. The old ones are almost impossible to manipulate. It's not just the joints that stiffen.

QUOTE OF THE DAY: "I've been accused of being shallow, but I find deep people are generally unhappy. In the great river of life, I prefer to be a fly fisherman. It keeps me on top." — Red Green

Red Green is the star of "The Red Green Show," a television series seen in the U.S. on PBS and in Canada on the CBC Network, and the author of "The Red Green Book" and "Red Green Talks Cars: A Love Story."

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