

commentary

from other pens...

Mexican migration accord went down with attacks

It was just before Sept. 11, and for two days Washington's late summer air was filled with talk of legal moves to enable illegal Mexican migrants to be recognized not as lawbreakers but as indispensable cogs in America's economic machine.

Mexican President Vicente Fox, in Washington on a state visit a year ago, pushed the idea. President Bush, with the Hispanic vote in mind, seemed receptive.

It's hard to imagine any foreign policy initiative that has fallen further and faster in the post-Sept. 11 era than immigration reform, as envisioned a year ago by "los dos amigos" (the two friends).

Rather than legalizing Mexican workers, Washington has been pressing hard to increase security along the border to prevent Islamic militants from using that area as a springboard for U.S. entry.

Mexico has been cooperative, U.S. officials say, but Mexican officials are wondering whether it's time to start talk about immigration again.

"We have an (American) administration that is looking at the world just through the prism of the campaign against terror," Arturo Sarukhan Casamitjana, chief adviser to Mexican Foreign Minister Jorge Castaneda, told The Washington Post. "I think we're in for a rough ride."

Even if the political will is there, however, the bureaucratic wherewithal may not be, given the reorganization under way at the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Robert Leikin, of the Nixon Center for Peace and Freedom, says a "dysfunctional" INS should not be asked to take on new tasks if it can't handle existing ones.

As an example, he says the INS has a mandate to apprehend 314,000 aliens overstaying their visas but has found only a few dozen.

No one can accuse Fox of not having a vision. He has spoken of having a North American common market patterned along the lines of the European Union, with free flows of labor across borders. At times he has sounded more North American than Latin American.

And during his state visit last year, Fox appeared to have wrested control of the U.S.-Mexican agenda, replacing narco-trafficking as the No. 1 priority with migration.

"Mexicans used to complain that we 'narcotized' the relationship. I would suggest they have 'migrated' the relationship," says Delal Baer, a Mexico specialist at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Nevertheless, Fox seemed to have had a willing partner in Bush, who said a year ago: "We're trying to work through a formula that will not penalize the person who has chosen the legal route, and at the same time recognizes the contribution the undocumented (immigrant) has made."

A Fox-Bush joint statement pledged at the time support for a migration agreement that would respect "the human dignity of all migrants, regardless of their (legal) status."

A year later, the dignity of undocumented migrants, of whom about 3 million are from Mexico, is a secondary issue.

"Immigration laws are going to be strengthened rather than liberalized," says George Grayson, a Latin America specialist at the College of William and Mary who follows Mexican affairs.

Grayson worries about terrorists slipping into United States by first entering Mexico through its "wide open" border with Guatemala and Belize. "Fortunately, none has crossed into the U.S. from Mexico thus far," Grayson said. "I doubt we'll be so lucky in the future."

Baer believes the only realistic easing of restrictions Mexico can expect is an increase in the number of temporary agricultural workers allowed to work legally on U.S. farms.

If they establish a good track record of circulating between the United States and Mexico from season to season without violations, they should be entitled to permanent residence, Baer said.

With only 25,000 or so eligible at present, she says, "We could bump that number up to 100,000 or 200,000 in the blink of an eye."

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



WEST DENIAL VIRUS

Be cautious purchasing services online

Dear Attorney General Stovall:

Before taking a recent trip out of state, I used the services of an online travel service provider that gives discounts on airline tickets. I typed in the day I wanted to arrive, the day I needed to return, and the price I was willing to pay.

When I received my itinerary, it indicated that I was to arrive at my destination at 10:30 p.m. Unfortunately, I had a dinner meeting scheduled for 7:00 p.m. that same evening, and the provider said the ticket was non-refundable and non-transferable. I did not want to spend money on another ticket, so I kept my purchased ticket and missed the dinner meeting.

Attorney General Stovall, is this right?

Dear Kansas Consumer:

Online providers such as these can offer very



carla j. stovall

• consumer corner

good discounts for services such as airline tickets, hotels, vacation packages, and so forth. However, those providers are often times limited in location, time, and dates for the services they can give at a reduced price.

On the website for the provider you used, it clearly states the hours during which customers will depart and by what time customers will arrive. Your scheduled arrival time was during the allotted time period.

Consumers should read all information posted on a provider's website before purchasing services. Providers will not usually proceed with consumers' purchases until those consumers have verified that they have read the terms and conditions listed.

Attorney General Carla J. Stovall offers this public service to help you avoid becoming a victim of consumer fraud. Although some of the details have been changed, the cases appearing in this column are based on actual complaints. For further information or to file a complaint, please write Attorney General Carla J. Stovall, Consumer Protection Division, 120 SW 10th, 2nd Floor, Topeka, Kansas 66612, or call the toll-free Consumer Hotline, 1-800-432-2310. Leave your name, number and subject of your inquiry with the receptionist and your call will be returned promptly.

You must remember this



jim mullen

• the village idiot

I am at the video rental store looking at a wall of movies under "New Releases," and I can't for the life of me remember the name of the movie that just six months before was such a big thing. One critic called it "one of those old-fashioned comedies they don't make anymore." Another said, "Has the makings of this summer's biggest smash!" And these were critics that didn't even work for the company that made the movie.

It must be up there, but nothing looks even vaguely familiar. "Head Over Heels," "Hearts in Atlantis," "Lost Souls," "Angel Eyes," "Before Night Falls," "Don't Say A Word." I wonder if my memory is going, but I hear people all around me having similar problems.

"Frequency?" Is that the one with John Cusack in the record store? "15 Minutes" with Robert De Niro? Was that even in the theaters? "The Cell"? Is that the prison movie with Sean Connery, or is that the one where Hugh Grant plays the doctor?

Why is it that I can remember the words to songs I haven't heard in 40 years, Bible verses, Shakespeare quotes, movie dialogue from "Casablanca,"

"The Godfather" and "Caddyshack," but I have no memory of even hearing of a movie called "Vertical Limit"? The box says it stars Scott Glenn and Chris O'Donnell as mountain climbers and that it opens with a cliff-hanger — literally. Yet it rings no bells.

We all have memory problems. Sue can remember stupid things I did 20 years ago, but she can't remember that I don't like squash. I won't eat squash, never liked squash, don't want to be near squash, please stop growing squash. I bring it up because tonight, of course, we had squash. I said, "Wow, squash again? Didn't we just have it Monday and Tuesday?" She said, "Remember that time you told me in 1986 that now was the time to buy a Betamax?"

That they would never sell for less than \$600? It was Feb. 16. It rained that day till about 3 o'clock, then it let up. It was a Friday. Want more squash?"

Advertisers think everyone has memory problems. Why else would Budweiser have to tell us 20 times a night to drink beer? Do they really think their customers will forget to drink beer if they're not constantly reminded? Have you ever heard a beer drinker say, "Whoops, I forgot to pick up some beer on the way home"? Or "Honey, while you're at the store, could you pick up some brand of beer that's not the one I usually drink?"

I used to keep a list of books by a certain mystery writer so I could remember if I had read them or not. Then I realized, if the books are that much the same, why am I reading them? I could just read the same one over and over. If I have to start keeping a list of movies I want to rent, maybe I should just buy one I like and watch it over and over.

Jim Mullen is the author of "It Takes A Village Idiot: A Memoir of Life After the City" (Simon and Schuster, 2001). He also contributes regularly to Entertainment Weekly.

Jamie Lee Curtis has nothing to hide



joan ryan

• commentary

Jamie Lee Curtis called More magazine a few months ago. She had an idea for a story and photo shoot. The result is in the issue that hits newsstands today. The actress is photographed in her underwear as she looks in the privacy of her own bedroom, without benefit of stylists, makeup or flattering camera angles.

Curtis, famously fit in movies such as "Perfect" and "True Lies," looks like what she is: a 43-year-old mother of two. Squishy in the middle. Chunky in the thighs. Flabby in the back. Thick at the knees and ankles.

On the next page of the magazine is another photograph. It's Glam Jamie, as Curtis calls her gussied-up self. She's gorgeous in a sleek black dress — carefully chosen to elongate and slim her torso — and sling-back heels with ankle ties. The magazine reveals, at Curtis's request, that the transformation took 13 people and three hours.

Obviously, it is no great revelation that movie and TV stars hide their physical flaws from the public, that the perfection we see on film is a fantasy created through lighting, makeup, clever camera angles and gauzy lenses.

Yet Curtis's true-life photograph has created the loudest press buzz since the magazine began publishing four years ago. The story has been picked up everywhere from Liz Smith's gossip column and the "Today" show to MSNBC's "Nachman," CNN Headline News, the London Daily Telegraph and USA Today.

Why?

Because in 2002, more than three decades into the women's movement, it is still a radical act for a woman to accept her body as it is.

"We knew the article was important," said Susan Crandall, editor-in-chief of the magazine, targeted to women in their 40s and 50s. "But we didn't know how huge it would be. Even a 23-year-old assistant at the 'Today' show, after we were on last week, said that the article made her feel so much better about her body."

"Today" interviewer Campbell Brown seemed aghast at Curtis' boldness, as if being photo-

graphed as she really looks is more shocking than being photographed topless (as Curtis was in "Trading Places").

"There is no way I would sit down for a magazine photo shoot with no makeup, no control tops, no wonder bra," Brown said to the actress. "Were you scared at all?"

"What I'm scared of is that that's what women have become accustomed to needing to feel good about themselves," Curtis replied. "And show business and media and magazines don't help by promoting these images of women that are completely airbrushed, that are completely altered, to then give you, the unsuspecting buyer, this fake sense that that's what people are supposed to look like."

Curtis has just written her fifth children's book, "I'm Gonna Like Me: Letting Off a Little Self-Esteem" (Joanna Cotler Books, 2002), which is what prompted the idea for the photo.

"I felt that if I'm going to try to promote something where I'm trying to explain self-esteem to children, I needed to live it," she said on the "Today" show. "And for me to live it means I need to

be the person I look at every morning when I wake up and stand in the mirror, you know, kind of as God intended me to look."

The impossible ideal of the perfect body — what we ought to look like — has been etched in our brains since our first Barbie. One photo won't change that. But it is a reminder of where the revolution fell short. As we were getting the world to accept us for who we are, we never figured out how to accept ourselves.

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