

ESBOZO DEL FUTURO POLITICO DE LA MUJER MEXICANA

Por Luis Melodelgado y Nora Haenn

El estado mexicano quiere fomentar la igualdad entre la población. En el 2006 apareció la "Ley de Igualdad Entre Hombres y Mujeres". Para el 2009, los partidos políticos acordaron que el 40% de los candidatos en elecciones estatales serían mujeres. ¿Repercutieron estas acciones en el México rural? En Calakmul, estas reformas, junto con la migración masculina al exterior, resultaron en la participación activa de la mujer en la política. Sin embargo, muchos todavía rechazan la repentina independencia femenina; incluso mujeres. En nuestra espontánea serie regresamos con un 2do. artículo desde el municipio de Calakmul, México, donde radicamos desde agosto, 2009.

Hace diez años, antes que la migración hacia la Unión de Estados Norteamericanos creciera descomunadamente, las 80-y-tantas comunidades de Calakmul eran gobernadas por hombres. Hoy en día, 7% de las autoridades comunitarias son mujeres, y la migración parece estar atizando este fenómeno. Francisca, es un claro ejemplo. Su esposo viajó a los EE.UU. hace 5 años. Debido al debacle económico del norteno país, esta mujer adulta, madre de tres hombres jóvenes, tuvo que asumir la responsabilidad por la economía de su hogar y representar a su esposo ante el Sindicato de Taxistas, y otras asambleas comunitarias. Pronto resultaría elegida miembro de la Junta de Desarrollo Económico del



Con su esposo ausente en los EE.UU., esta madre cuida de sus cuatro hijos, al tiempo de atender el trabajo de su esposo en la milpa. With her husband in the U.S., this Mom cares for four children, while taking on her husband's work on the family farm.

FOTO DE NORA HAENN

Municipio, ocupación que la obliga a viajar, lo que su esposo seguramente opondría: "A él debes atenderlo y no tienes tiempo para nada más. Con él al lado, todo se complica".

Francisca disfruta su nueva vida, y al hablar sobre las responsabilidades contraídas, ella toca un asunto que toda mujer debe enfrentar: la participación femenina en la vida política sobreentendiendo la dudosa moralidad de ella. "Al final debes dejar de

escuchar críticas y chismes. Antes me preocupaba mucho que mis vecinos me vieran con otros hombres, entonces tuve que aceptar que esta actitud no era saludable porque, en realidad, estaba en juego mi trabajo". Esta actitud quizás pudiera resultarle difícil de adoptar a una joven esposa.

El marido de Ana, 26, reside en El Norte desde hace más de 4 años. Como su familia tiene muchas deudas él envía dinero; irregularmente. Pese a la escasez, conseguir empleo no es opción para ella. Además de tener que contratar cuidado para sus pequeños, ella se enfrentaría con la idea generalizada que, "una esposa fiel permanece en casa". Un trabajo iniciaría rumores que al llegar a oídos de su esposo—comúnmente de boca de su propia familia—resultarían en una tensión excesiva para el ya de por sí frágil matrimonio. "Por eso estoy aquí, aguantándolo todo", dice ella estoicamente desde su casa.

Imposible predecir si los aventajados pasos de mujeres como Francisca se multiplicarán, o si mujeres como Ana encontrarán resolución a sus problemas. Por ahora, concluimos que en México, la migración al extranjero está ayudando a subvertir las viejas dinámicas de género.

Luis y Nora son residentes de Chatham County. Los intereses de Luis son la escritura y el teatro. Nora enseña antropología con énfasis en asuntos mexicanos en NCSU.

IN Mexico, Migration Challenges Women and politics

By Luis Melodelgado and Nora Haenn

Mexico's federal government has taken significant steps to foster equality between the sexes. In 2006, the "Law on Equality between Women and Men" went into effect. In 2009, the country's political parties agreed that 40 percent of all candidates standing in state elections would be women. Have these actions trickled down to the local level? In Calakmul, on the Yucatan Peninsula, the combination of national changes and men's migration encourages women to enter public life. At the same time, not everyone is comfortable with women's newfound independence, including many women. In this second article in an occasional series, we return to the county of Calakmul in Mexico, where we have lived since August, 2009 thanks to a Fulbright-Garcia Robles grant.

Ten years ago, before migration to the U.S. ballooned; Calakmul's 80-plus communities were all governed by men. Today, 7 percent of community authorities are women, and migration seems to be

playing a role. Francisca exemplifies this new generation. Her husband went to the U.S. in 2005. Since the U.S. recession, this middle-aged mother of three young adults has been financially responsible for her family. She represents her absent husband in the taxi union and community meetings. She was also elected to the county economic development board. The work requires she travel, something her husband wouldn't approve: "When your husband is here, you have to attend to him, and then there's no time. With him around, it's more complicated."

Francisca enjoys her new pursuits, but when asked about the challenges, she notes an issue all Calakmul women face: the idea that a woman's public life involves a suspect virtue. "People criticize you, but there comes a moment when you have to stop listening to the gossip. There was a time I thought, 'what will my neighbors think if they see me with a man?' But, then I decided this attitude wasn't helpful, because, really, this was my job." Francisca's position is one a younger wife might hesitate to take.

Twenty-six year-old Ana's husband has also been in the U.S. for four years. The family has debts, so he sends money, unreliably. Despite her insecure finances, for Ana, paid employment is not an option. In addition to having to find childcare for her three small children, Ana would run up against the popular idea that a faithful wife stays at home. A job would incur rumors, sure to be reported to Ana's husband by her watchful in-laws. The resulting argument would strain a marriage already under pressure. "And, so here I am, enduring it all," Ana says from her home.

It's impossible to predict whether the gains made by women like Francisca will persist or whether women like Ana will find solutions to their predicaments. We can conclude, however, that men's migration is unsettling old gender dynamics.

Luis and Nora are Chatham residents. Luis is a translator with interests in theater and writing. Nora teaches the anthropology of Mexico at N.C. State University. Email: wordxchange@yahoo.com

COURTHOUSE

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plastic, which allowed air to stoke the flames but seemed to prevent water from reaching them.

The company performing the renovations, Progressive Contracting of Sanford, specializes in restoring historic buildings, and its website shows its finished work on courthouses in Camden and Chowan counties, NC, as well as projects as far away as Baltimore MD and Washington, DC.

As the last embers were extinguished on Friday, rays of hope began to emanate from the shell of the Courthouse. The collection of the Museum of the Chatham County Historical Association, located on the west side, was largely spared. Books, photographs and daguerreotypes, maps and documents have been moved to Chatham Mills and opened up and



The photograph of Col. John Randolph Lane, who survived Gettysburg to return and become a Chatham civic leader, dries in Chatham Mills.

PHOTO BY ANTONIA SERENO

spread out to dry – in some cases freeze dried. "Our most valuable books, that we don't think we can get anywhere else, they have been freeze dried and put in cold storage," said Barbara Pugh, President of the Chatham County Historical Association. Experts from the NC Department of Cultural Resources have come to help.

No irreplaceable public records, such as titles to property, marriages and divorces, and births and deaths, were lost either. "The Register of Deeds office is in a different building, and the records are also stored electronically and off site," said Debra Henzey, of the County Manager's office.

Most documents lost were in the District Attorney's office, but Orange Chatham D.A. Jim Woodall said that no felons will be freed due to the fire. "Everything we have is a copy," he said. "Law enforcement agencies are providing us with new reports. We will have lost some of our work product. No evidence was lost."

Taxpayers should not have to foot the bill for whatever comes next. Progressive Contracting has insurance, as does Chatham County on its buildings. The next step will involve insurance adjusters, estimators and lawyers figuring out what can be done

and who pays for what.

On March 31, the Chatham County Commissioners unanimously voted to rebuild the courthouse after learning that the remaining walls can be saved. There seems to be an overwhelming desire in Pittsboro to rebuild the Courthouse as it appeared during the 129 years before March 25.

"The exact nature of the restoration will be determined later," according to Vice Chairman George Lucier. "We will form a task force and involve the community, Pittsboro, and court personnel to help us make the best decisions. Our goal is that the fire of 2010 will be part of the history of the courthouse, not the end of it."

This time around, lets add a sprinkler system and a fire alarm system hardwired to the Fire Department.

Julian Sereno is editor and publisher of Chatham County Line.