

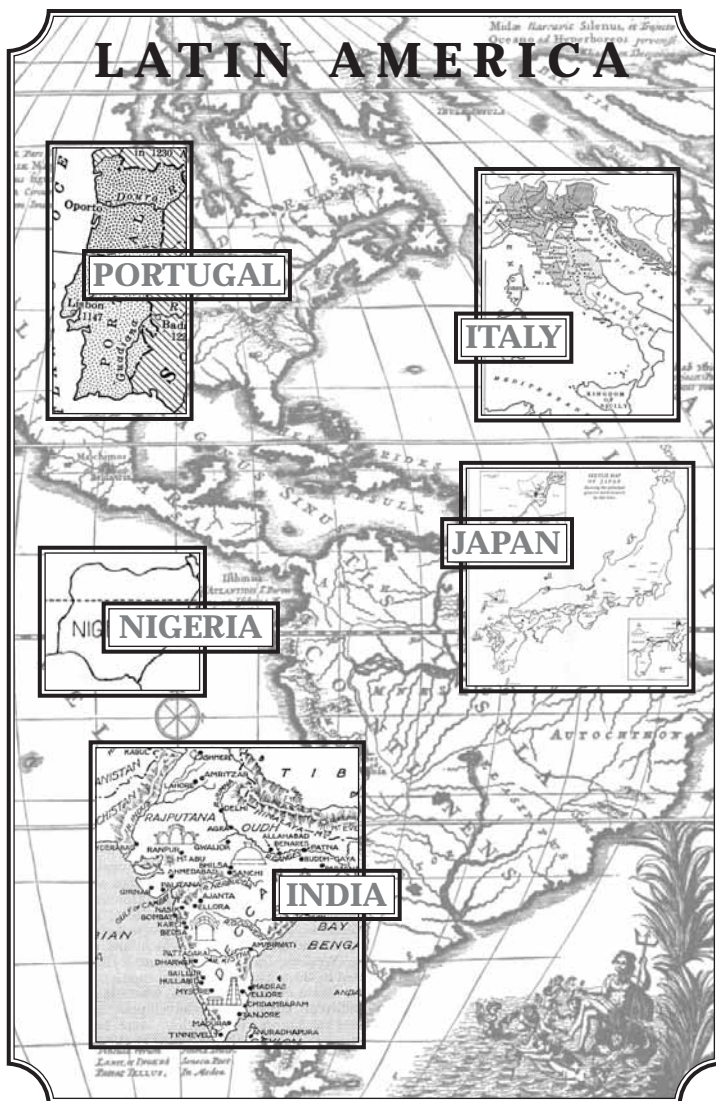
ES, ...pero, Lo Parece?

Por Luis Melodelgado y Nora Haenn

Los países latinoamericanos como los EEUU han soportado ondas migratorias con regularidad. Las naciones centro y sudamericanas alrededor del Mar Caribe tienen una gran mayoría afro-americana, y en ellas se hablan oficialmente toda clase de idiomas, incluso español. En el siglo pasado, Brasil y México reclutaban activamente colonos venidos desde el medio-oriente. (Shakira, la popular cantante colombiana tiene sangre libanesa e italiana). Muchas naciones han contribuido con la diversidad cultural Latinoamericana. Por ejemplo: alemanes plantaron los primeros sembradíos de café en Guatemala; Brasil es hogar para muchos japoneses; tras la guerra civil estadounidense, muchos confederados establecieron colonias en el Brasil; Chipilo, en México, es una colonia italiana. Así, cuando los latinoamericanos emigran a los EEUU, toda esta diversidad viene con ellos. El censo de 2007 cuenta que, de los residentes extranjeros viviendo en nuestro país el 31% es de origen mexicano y, que otros países latinoamericanos han aportado con un 19%.

Las cifras, por supuesto, no cuentan sus historias. Para algunos de estos inmigrantes, esta diversidad ha sido crucial en sus vidas. Bea Kendall, por ejemplo. 13 años residente del Condado de Chatham, trabaja como anestesista en los hospitales de UNC y es una atleta dedicada. Sus padres se conocieron cuando su madre vino a los EEUU a estudiar. Cuando niña, Bea vivió un tiempo en el pueblo natal de su madre. Bea se considera Hispánica. "Me interesa que los demás entiendan quien soy", asegura. Y por esta razón alguna vez se encuentra explicando sus orígenes. Gente como ella, primera generación de inmigrantes, quisieran que nos preguntemos si acaso nuestras ideas —sobre cómo un 'Latino' o un 'Hispano' deben mirarse, o cómo deben actuar— responden a estereotipos.

Aquí debemos añadir otro substrato a su historia: Bea se parece mucho a su padre, un estadounidense de ascendencia escocesa. A pesar que Europa ha contribuido siglos a la cultura latinoamericana, todavía mucha gente se sorprende al escuchar que Bea es tanto colombiana como escocesa. La razón, según ella, es que, "Pocos saben de la diversidad cultural



latinoamericana, o de su estratificación social. Hasta los indígenas latinoamericanos son aglutinados en grupos étnicos donde quizás no correspondan."

Bea está interesada en remarcar tales diferencias y en combatir los estereotipos. Pero no solo la mueve el deseo de informar sobre el multiculturalismo latinoamericano. El estereotipar puede engendrar la discriminación. Bea piensa que los inmigrantes, sin importar sus particularidades, todavía sufren discriminación; su propia familia, debido al prejuicio que los rodeaba mantuvo en privado el origen de su madre. Como resultado de sus experiencias, Bea recibe afectuosamente a los recién llegados, y utiliza su propio ejemplo para responder civilmente ante los prejuicios a su alrededor.

Su historia nos recuerda cuán diferente es la gente que nos rodea, y también cómo nuestras acciones afectan las generaciones futuras. Le agradecemos por contarnos su historia, por arrojar una luz sobre lo que significa ser Latino.

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.

WHO COUNTS AS LATINO/A?

By Luis Melodelgado and Nora Haenn

Like the United States, Latin American countries have seen regular influxes of immigrants. Central and South American countries that rim the Caribbean have sizable African-American populations, only some of whom speak Spanish. A century ago, Brazil and Mexico actively encouraged settlers from the Middle East. (Colombian pop star Shakira is of Italian and Lebanese descent.) German planters were responsible for Guatemala's first coffee groves. Brazil is home to a large group of Japanese-Brazilians. The Mexican town of Chipilo stands out as an Italian colony. Interestingly, after the U.S. Civil War, a collection of confederate families established colonies in Brazil. When Latin Americans migrate to the United States, they bring this diversity with them. To be sure, the 2007 Census of the U.S. foreign-born population shows 31 percent of immigrants come from Mexico. Other Latin American countries, however, account for 19 percent of the U.S. immigrant population.

For some people, this diversity is important. Take, for instance, Bea Kendall. A Chatham resident for 13 years, Bea works as a nurse anesthetist at UNC hospitals and is an avid runner. Her parents met when Bea's mother came to the United States from Colombia to attend college. Bea spent part of her childhood in her mother's home town. She sees herself as a Hispanic woman, and, for her, "it's important that people understand that's who I am." As a result, Bea often finds herself explaining to others her heritage. Bea, along with the many first-generation immigrants, asks us to consider whether we carry stereotyped ideas of how a Latino/Latina or Hispanic person might look or behave.

Which is why we should add another element to this story. Bea bears the features of her father's Scottish ancestry, and, even though Europeans have long been contributing to Latin American cultures, many people are surprised to learn she is both Scottish and Colombian. Bea thinks her background comes as a revelation because "people don't always recognize the diversity of Latin American cultures, the diversity of social classes. Even Native Americans from Latin America can get pigeon-holed into a broader group of people that may not represent them."

Bea has an active interest in highlighting these differences and in combating stereotypes. Her concern goes beyond a desire to educate people about Latin American cultures. Stereotypes can contribute to discrimination. Bea notes that all immigrants, regardless of their particular histories, are vulnerable to discrimination. Bea's own family sensed enough prejudice that they chose to be private about her mother's heritage. Consequently, Bea strives to be welcoming to people new to the United States, while using her own example to respectfully respond to any stereotype she might encounter.

Bea's story is important because it reminds us of the diversity in our midst and how today's interactions can affect generations to come. We thank Bea for sharing her story and for making us think carefully about who counts as a Latino.

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

BRIEFS

continued from page 11.

Briar Chapel hosts benefit run

Briar Chapel is hosting the Briar Chapel 5K benefit run on Saturday, May 9. The race follows a new USA Track & Field-certified 5K course.

Proceeds will help the Abundance Foundation, a Chatham non-profit, and its work to increase public awareness of sustainable energy usage and local food consumption.

Participants can get more information and register at www.theabundancefoundation.org/briar-chapel-5k.

New farmers market at Bellemont Station

Carolina Brewery in Pittsboro will be hosting a weekly Farmer's Market starting on May 2 and taking place every Saturday from 8 a.m. until noon. The market will run through October and will feature vendors within a 50-mile radius of Pittsboro. Interested sellers can still apply by

visiting carolinabrewery.com/carolina_brewery_directions.html to download a PDF application including market rules.

Burrito Bash fundraiser

The 6th Annual Burrito Bash with Live and Silent Auction to benefit Chatham Animal Rescue and Education and Chatham Concerned Biker's Association will take place Tuesday, May 12, 6-9 p.m. at the General Store Café. Live auction

begins at 7:30 p.m. Silent auction closes at 7:15 p.m.

A \$15 donation Tuesday night (or \$12 purchased in advance) will provide you a General Store dinner burrito, chips and salsa, and live music provided by The Big Time Party Band.

For information, email burrito-bash@chathamanimalrescue.org, click on www.chathamanimalrescue.org/burritobash2009 or call 919.542.5757.

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