

Salvador:

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**FROM UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE
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COLUMN OF THE AMERICAS by Patrisia Gonzales and Roberto Rodriguez
'THE OTHER CONQUEST' CONTINUES**

Ancient America, invented America: two Americas. Which do we live in?

Ancient America is indigenous and spiritual, a balance of male and female energies. Its span is from Alaska to Chile, and it is thousands of years old. The material America is alien and male-dominated. It is one nation-state and a mere 200-plus years old. The two worlds are seemingly always in conflict.

This is virtually the same conflict depicted in a powerful movie, "La Otra Conquista" or "The Other Conquest." Its message, notes director Salvador Carrasco is that "the spirit of a people can never be conquered."

Contrast the movie with the recently concluded two-week national celebration in May. It has seemingly been completely appropriated by U.S. beer companies beyond recognition and has also been fully embraced by the public as an all-American holiday. This date (which commemorates a victory by the Mexican Army over an alien invading force) is emblematic of that continual struggle between ancient and invented America.

Despite a political, cultural and economic worldwide hegemony by the United States, ancient America has not gone away. Within this context, those from ancient America continue to culturally resist, while invented America attempts to suppress and commercialize that resistance. In fact, some will further argue that the demographic "browning" of the United States, precipitated by the "influx of brown hordes," is helping to reintegrate this country into ancient America -- an abhorrent thought for some.

This tension is not simply about demographics, but rather, about competing world views. Those who speak of a cultural war raging in America are correct. It pits Pat Buchanan's vision of walls and moats vs. Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision of justice and equality. Those who rally to Buchanan's side -- such as the Arizona vigilante ranchers who call for the hunting of human beings along the border -- are evidence of a moribund culture. Their call to violence -- which has resulted in several casualties -- is seemingly a dying gasp, trying to turn back the clock.

"The Other Conquest" is the No. 1 foreign film in the U.S., more correctly described as the No. 1 indigenous film on the continent. In it we see how an invading European society militarily imposes its culture and spirituality upon indigenous peoples. The first conquest was the genocide of millions and the land theft of America. The other conquest refers to a spiritual battle that continues to this day. In fact, both battles continue simultaneously. As Carrasco notes, "It's happening in Chiapas today."

So too in the United States. The battle over immigration we have always characterized as "Indian removal." Given the impossibility of removing all red-brown peoples, a second "conquest" is also taking place. In effect, those red-brown peoples not being deported are being "alienized" and transformed into Americans. Again, "Americans" in the narrow sense. This is accomplished by eliminating their ancient memory and foisting upon them an invented history and foreign identity. Even racially, they have historically been converted (on paper, but never in reality) into a "white" or European population by the U.S. Census Bureau. This we have long called "demographic genocide."

That the movie was made at all is quite significant, notes Carrasco, primarily because the indigenous point of view is given voice. That's a rarity. Even the voice of Nobel Peace Prize winner, Rigoberta Menchu, is still subject to silencing. She was recently charged with treason in her country of Guatemala for having the audacity to pursue charges of genocide against its former military rulers.

This is what the movie alludes to -- the attempt to spiritually obliterate indigenous people to the point where they are silenced, where they cease to exist -- and in their place is simply a human vessel with a European culture and spirituality. Anyone not conforming to this new identity is considered at best a renegade and a heathen. The movie also alludes to a tenuous syncretism that haunts all conquerors. As the protagonist Topiltzin tells the priest, "You can take my body, but never my spirit." That's what conquerors the world over fear ... that despite their superior weaponry and cultural imposition, in the end, have they really conquered?

In the lyrics of Aztlan Underground's "Obsolete Man," we find virtually the same message: "You can take my life, but you'll never get my soul." It is proof that the spirit of ancient America lives on.

As Carrasco notes, in the face of cultural resistance, "history shows us that force is totally ineffective." The antithesis of conquest, he concludes, "is the respect for all peoples and cultures."

*** Infor regarding the national release can be found at:
www.THEOTHERCONQUEST.com**

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