

Library Podcast Interview with Patricia Leamon

(Opening Music, Introductory Remarks)

Pat is the GTCC Public Services Librarian. She will be talking about the importance of citizens of the United States being familiar with Mexico and Mexican culture.

What is appealing to you about Mexican culture?

There is so much to experience in Mexican culture. It is a culture rich in architecture, art, and literature. For example, you don't have to go to Egypt to have the pyramid experience-Mexico also has pyramids. And the ones in Mexico you can even climb all the way to the top. Underground passages exist, archaeology sites, murals, art museums-it all exists in Mexico. Diego Rivera murals, and small villages that specialize in a particular craft such as weaving or basket work.

How is Mexican food?

In a word, wonderful. It is nothing like Taco Bell or Chipotle. Traditional Mexican food is a mixture of Aztec, Mayan, and Spanish cuisine. The moles, salsas, and fish dishes are nothing like what we think of as Mexican food – much richer in taste and texture. On another level there are indigenous foods such as grasshoppers and ant larva that can be found in just about any outdoor market. And the country has a rich tradition of gourmet restaurants and Mom and Pop places to eat

What are the languages of Mexico?

Spanish of course, but there are also a large number of native peoples' languages spoken in Mexico, 82 different languages to be exact. It is useful for Americans to know Spanish as more and more of our population comes from Mexico and Latin American. A couple of less obvious benefits-learning a language is a way of keeping your mind sharp, and it can be enormously fun.

What are some good books about Mexico and who are some of your favorite authors writing about Mexico?

Octavio Paz – Labyrinth of Solitude.

Carlos Fuentes father of Mexican literature – Terra Nostra, The Old Gringo.

Barbara Kingsolver-The Lacuna.

Laura Esquivel - Like Water for Chocolate.

Earl Shorris-The Life and Times of Mexico.

Other favorite authors

Sandra Cisneros and Isabel Allende.

Why is it important for us to know more about this part of the world?

34,000,000 Mexican Americans in the US...how their culture is like and unlike ours, and understand contributions of Mexicans and Latins to US life. Latin Americans, including Mexicans or person of Mexican descent, are the fastest growing part of the US population.

Do you have any thoughts about immigration from this part of the world?

Immigration – being exposed to other cultures broadens our experience and enriches our lives. It cuts both ways – American culture is enriched by Mexican/Latin culture and vice versa. And Mexican immigration to the US has decreased....1, 000,000 Mexican families have actually returned home. Immigration is on the decline, contrary to what popular conception is.

What are some ways Mexican life is different from life in Greensboro?

Music is one. Mariachis can be paid to play music almost anywhere in public, and can only be found in restaurant in the US. A type of musical not found in the US are the Aztec drumming circles that take place in town squares.

Catholicism – 82% of population are Roman Catholic, although many other religions are practiced as well.

The level of noise in Mexico is much different than the in US. There are almost daily outdoor celebrations – fiestas, name day celebrations, religious celebrations – all complete with fireworks and music. Something is always going on.

(Closing remarks and music)