OPINION

Laredo Morning Times
A Hearst Newspaper

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CUIDANDO LO NUESTRO

Memorial Day memories, community events

Hope everyone has a wonderful and safe Memorial Day weekend! Growing up at my house, we would always celebrate my sister Josie's birthday (May 31st). She would have been 66 this year, but she passed away in 1972 with my mother and sister Priscilla in a car accident.

The Memorial Day holiday originally began in 1868 as "Decoration Day". It was after the Civil War. Many Americans would decorate the graves of Civil War soldiers with flowers.

After World War I, the remembrance expanded to commemorate all military members lost in all American wars.

In 1971, Congress officially made it a federal holiday with the Uniform Monday Holiday Act (last Monday in May).

National Moment of Remembrance: At 3p.m. (local time), Americans are asked to pause for one minute to reflect upon and remember the nation's fallen heroes. If possible, take some time to visit leave a U.S. flag, flowers or simply visit the grave(s) of any of your family members or friends that have given their lives to protect ours.

My dad (Alfredo Duncan), and Tio Pancho (Juan Francisco Morales) proudly served in the Navy (52nd Seabees) during World War II. My Tio Wes (Thomas Westly Duncan) and Tio Clarence also served in the military at that time. To them, and all our loved ones who have proudly served our country, "Thank you for your love, service, and dedication to our country."

This year America is celebrating 250 years since we signed the Declaration of Independence.

I am sure their will be many events to celebrate this milestone. It's a time of honoring our American story. This past week, the Webb County Heritage Foundation hosted Laredo's 271st Birthday Celebration honoring our people, families, traditions and stories that continue to shape our Laredo community.

"This celebration highlights the vibrant culture of Laredo and its historic downtown, as well as the incredible local organizations and businesses that make our community so special," said Andrea Ordonez, Director of Operations at the Webb County Heritage Foundation.

Since 1980, the Webb County Heritage Foundation (WCHF) has dedicated itself to promoting the history and heritage of Laredo and the border region through a comprehensive working package of year-round tourism venues, a historical archive for local and visiting researchers, walking and step-on tours, annual events and historical exhibits, workshops on historic preservation topics, collaborative projects with state-wide and national preservation organizations, presentations on historical subjects to civic and school groups, and multimedia information tools on heritage educational topics and heritage tourism.

Brochures, tour maps, and booklets published by the WCHF are the primary promotional tools used by the City of Laredo to promote our community as a heritage tourism destination.

Indeed, the Walking and Step-On tours of Laredo provided by the WCHF are the only professional tours of the city that exist in this community.

The Heritage Foundation operates two history museums – the Republic of the Rio Grande Museum and the Villa Antigua Border Heritage Museum – that are open year-round and represent the only place that visitors can learn about Laredo and Webb County's origins and historical development. The Webb County Heritage Foundation sponsors the annual celebration of the founding of Laredo, again, the only organization to do so and the only organization that systematically promotes Laredo and Webb County as a heritage tourism destination.

The Webb County Heritage Foundation is a nonprofit organization registered with the IRS as a 501(c)(3) organization. Its mission is to "raise awareness and appreciation of Webb County's Heritage by advocating the protection and preservation of historic architecture, ranching heritage and cultural traditions, customs and folklore of the border region through heritage education and tourism." For more information on the organization visit their website at www.webbheritage-.org or reach out to 956.727.0977 or heritage@webbheritage.org.

Looking for some BINGO fun! Mercy Ministries Laredo will be having their 5th Annual Bingo Maddness on June 7 at the Laredo College Maravillo Gym located at West End Washington Street. Doors open at 11 a.m. They will have two early bird games at starting at noon and the regular bingo starts at 1 p.m. Pre-sale tickets are $30 and $35 at the door. For more information, call 956.721.7408.

Continuing with fun filled festivities, the Laredo Philharmonic will be having a "Fiesta Sinfonica" on June 14 at the Laredo College's Guadalupe and Lilia Martinez Fine Arts Center located at the main campus on West End Washington Street. The program begins at 3 p.m. with the "vibrant sounds of Spain and Mexico in a dazzling symphony concert featuring works by Falla, Granados, Moncayo, Marquez, and more. For ticket information call 956.763.9960 or visit www.laredophilharmonic.com.

Rounding out today's list of exciting activities, join the Tecos on July 4 for their 250th Celebration! As usual, the Tecos will be throwing a party Laredo Style — fun for all the family. Enjoy a great baseball game, as the Tecos take on the Sultanes from Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico, at the Uni-Trade Stadium. They are partnering with the United Way of Laredo. Plans are in the works. Come join the fun, support a great cause and experience brilliant fireworks!

Mark your calendars

AREA HEALTH EDUCATION CENTER (AHEC): KNOW LUPUS

AHEC invites all health providers to a presentation by Dr. Antonio E. Mancera, Rheumatologist to a free virtual education presentation on the signs and symptoms of lupus. The session is scheduled for Thursday from noon to 2 p.m. on Zoom. CEUs will be awarded to Physicians and offered at no cost to pre-registered participants. For more information call 956.712.0037.

IMAGINARIUM OF SOUTH TEXAS: HEB FREE FAMILY FUN NIGHT

Join us for the HEB Free Family Fun Night on Friday from 6-9 p.m. at the Imaginarium located the main campus of Laredo College (West End Washington Street) Building P-149. For more information, please call 956.728.0404.

R.B. COWL REHABILITATION CENTER: CHILDREN'S ORTHOPEDIC CLINIC

Ruthe B. Cowl Rehabilitation Center will be hosting their monthly Children's Orthopedic Clinic on June 4. Registration is required. To schedule an appointment, call 956.722.2431.

AREA HEALTH EDUCATION CENTER (AHEC): RALLY UP 988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

To create awareness, AHEC will be having a *rally up* event on May 29 from 11:30 a.m. to noon. They will be meeting on the corner of McPherson and Del Mar. You are invited to join them and wear your 988 T-shirt or the color purple to remind everyone that *you are not alone*. For more information, contact AHEC at 956.712.0037.

AREA HEALTH EDUCATION CENTER (AHEC): MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

Everyone is invited to attend AHEC's mental health awareness virtual seminar with guest speaker, Myrthala de Alejo, MA, LPC, DPC. The session is scheduled for June 5 from 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. Participants will earn 1 Knowledge Contact Hour. For more information call 956.712.0037.

MERCY MINISTRIES: BINGO MADNESS

Come join the Bing Madness and support the Mercy Clinic. Their 5th Annual Bingo will be held on June 7 at the Laredo College Maravillo Gym located on West End Washington Street. Doors open at 11am with 2 early bird specials at Noon. The regular bingo begins at 1 p.m. Pre-sale tickets are $30 for 10 games. On the day of the event, ticket price will be $35. There will be food, door prizes and a raffle. For more information, contact Diana Granados at 956.721.7408 or diana.granados@mercy.net.

SACRED HEART CHILDREN'S HOME: CONSECRATION TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

The Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus invite the community to join them with their festivities for the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Novena (Prayer) at 7p.m. every night from June 3 to June 11 at the Children's Home. The Consecration will be on June 12 at 7:30 p.m. at the Children's Home. For more information 956.691.8746.

IMAGINARIUM OF SOUTH TEXAS: GALA NIGHT HONORING DR. RICARDO CIGARROA & HONORABLE ALYSSA CIGARROA

The Gala is scheduled for June 11 from 6:30-10:30 p.m. at Paseo Real Receptions. For more information, please call 956.728.0404.

UNITED WAY OF LAREDO, INC.: MAIN EVENT SPIRIT NIGHT FOR UNITED WAY

Come join the fun and support a great cause on June 18 from 5–8 p.m. at the Main Event in Mall Del Norte. 20% of all Sales will be donated to United Way of Laredo for all activities, video games, food, gift cards and non-alcoholic beverage purchase. Just remember to drop your itemized receipt in the "drop box at the bowl desk to be included." For more information, call 956.723.9113.

If you have an upcoming community event or information on a non-profit 501(c)(3) charitable organization you would like to share, email me at 956cuidandolonuestro@gmail.com.

Peggy M. Duncan United Way of Laredo

GUEST EDITORIAL Dallas Morning News

Cuba needs a transition, not a leadership shuffle

Cuba has gone dark. After enduring blackouts lasting as much as 22 hours per day for several months, a Cuban official announced last week that the island had run out of oil and diesel. The communist regime has been in a slow-motion decay for decades, but in the last months, the U.S. blocked oil shipments from Venezuela and other countries, bringing the island closer to economic collapse.

There is an opportunity to bring Cuba back into the light. The country is ripe for regime change with exiles in Miami planning what they call an orderly political transition to democracy.

But there are troubling signs from the Trump administration pointing to a Venezuelan-style transactional approach rather than a democratic shift. That would mean some change in leadership, but survival of the regime. That is the wrong way to go.

The Trump administration may want to end communist rule without pushing Cuba into chaos. But capitalism absent democracy is not a path to freedom. Transitions require careful diplomacy to be successful. But President Donald Trump appears focused on short-term victories rather than a sustained state-building effort.

The administration has been in negotiations with Cuba for months. It is not clear what they are bargaining for. But last week, John Ratcliffe, the CIA director, visited the island and met with Raúl Rodríguez Castro, the grandson of former President Raúl Castro and an influential security official.

At the same time, the Justice Department indicted the elder Castro over his alleged role in the downing of four planes operated by exiles in 1996.

This is where the Venezuelan playbook becomes evident. Is the U.S. planning a military operation to extract a 94-year-old? Why? Raúl Castro could be a symbolic prize, but to what end? The Venezuela playbook was acceptable insofar as it removed a violent dictator. But it has so far failed to result in the level of expanded freedom Venezuelans deserve, and there is no signal that Trump is working in that direction.



Ramon Espinosa/Associated Press

People illuminate themselves with their phones while playing dominoes as a fire set up by residents protesting against prolonged power outages burns on a street on May 14 in Havana.

Cuba cannot be just a mercantile project for the U.S. Its people must be free.

The Cuban military leadership controls the economy and has no motive to loosen its grip. Through GAESA, a secretive conglomerate that manages tourism, banking, gas stations and even internet access, the military elites are doing just fine with no accountability even within the communist regime.

Cutting a deal with the communists who have enriched themselves leaves Cubans little better off.

Ordinary Cubans have been in survival mode for years. Ensuring humanitarian aid reaches them should be a priority. As the island faces economic and infrastructure collapse, there is an opportunity for Cuba to move toward genuine self-determination. Cuban exiles have the means and will for such a transition.

However, shuffling leadership and letting capital flow, as the Trump administration did in Venezuela, is no answer for Cuba or our hemisphere. .

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The Laredo Morning Times does not publish anonymous letters.

Letters must include the writer's first and last names as well as a phone number to verify identity. The phone number is not published; it is used solely to verify identity and to clarify content, if necessary.

When responding to another's letter, writers should focus on the topic and not on the original writer themselves. No name-calling or gratuitous abuse is allowed. Letters are edited for style, grammar, length and civility. Also, letters longer than 1,000 words will not be accepted.

Please send letters to editorial@lmtonline.com attached in a word document or in the email itself. If you cannot send an email, mail to Letters to the Editor, 5711 McPherson Rd Suite 203A, Laredo, TX 78041.