

## **MEXICO'S FOX DISAPPOINTS IMMIGRANTS**

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### **Body**

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At 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Mexican President Vicente **Fox** made his grand entrance into the huge, modern Tijuana Cultural Center.

Surrounded by bodyguards, he was an imposing presence with his 6-foot-4 frame, his booming voice and his signature cowboy boots shining under the TV lights.

But behind the facade of power, **Fox** was a wounded man.

In February, the Mexican Congress, controlled by the opposition, dealt him a humiliating blow by barring him from traveling outside the country.

He was going away far too often, they said, and was using those trips to boost his international stature at the expense of domestic issues.

That's why, when the National Association of Hispanic Journalists invited him to be the opening act for its 20th annual convention, instead of going to San Diego, where the event took place last week, he invited the 1,500 U.**S.** journalists attending the event to cross the border.

For a full hour, he answered their questions.

Some people were impressed.

"**Fox** is a 21st century politician," said John Garcia, a TV journalist from New York. "He looks good, answers the questions with sound bites, and has an open manner about him."

But others saw him as more of the same old-style politico who is keeping alive the long-lived tradition of talking a lot while saying very little.

Many of us in the audience that evening were **disappointed**. We had expected he would say something new about issues such as his running dispute with Cuban President Fidel Castro, human rights in **Mexico** or, even better, would take the opportunity to talk clearly about the state of immigration negotiations with Washington, a question as important for the U.**S.** as it is for **Mexico**.

After all, like it or not, both countries share a 2,000-mile border that is impossible to effectively control no matter what measures are taken or how many resources are devoted to such a task.

So much so that there are 3 million to 8 million - really no one knows for sure - undocumented Mexicans living in the U.**S.**

More was expected

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But **Fox** *disappointed* us.

Everybody knows that the amnesty for Mexican **immigrants**, which seemed so close before the World Trade Center attack, is now at best a remote possibility. But when asked about it, **Fox** just repeated what he already had expressed more than a few times before.

"Sept. 11 changed the rhythm of a vision Bush and I shared of a common future for both our nations," he said. "That painful day changed so many things, not only in New York, not only in the U.**S.** and **Mexico**, but all over the world."

No doubt the Mexican president was right, but his compatriots expected more: They wanted him to tell them for how long the terrible Sept. 11 tragedy will be invoked every time someone raises the issue of President Bush's apparent change of heart about the amnesty.

"During his campaign, **Fox** used to call them heroes," said Jorge Diaz, a member of the Coalition Pro-Defense of Migrants, talking about his countrymen who migrated to El Norte searching for a better life.

"But he seems to have forgotten about them. I would like to ask him: Where are the promises he made to us?"

Diaz and other members of his group were protesting outside the Cultural Center, holding a sign that read "1,970 migrants killed since 1995. How many more?"

Finally, after some prodding by Univision news anchor Maria Elena Salinas, **Fox** conceded that no new immigration deal with Washington would happen any time soon.

"I hope [it takes place] next year," he said.

**Fox** was not very forthcoming in Tijuana. But it would be great for the U.**S.**, **Mexico** and mainly for the many hardworking undocumented workers living as second-class citizens in this country if, as he said, the immigration reforms had been postponed instead of killed, as many believe.

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## Graphic

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Vicente **Fox**

## Classification

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**Industry:** INTERNATIONAL TOURISM (75%)

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