



Las Marthas

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Using this Guide



Community Cinema is a rare public forum: a space for people to gather who are connected by a love of stories, and a belief in their power to change the world. This discussion guide is designed as a tool to facilitate dialogue, and deepen understanding of the complex issues in the film *Las Marthas*. It is also an invitation to not only sit back and enjoy the show – but to step up and take action. This guide is not meant to be a comprehensive primer on a given topic. Rather, it provides important context, and raises thought provoking questions to encourage viewers to think more deeply. We provide suggestions for areas to explore in panel discussions, in the classroom, in communities, and online. We also provide valuable resources, and connections to organizations on the ground that are fighting to make a difference.

For information about the program, visit www.communitycinema.org



From the Filmmaker

The stories that resonate most with me are the ones that reflect my culture-clashed identity, as a Chicana who grew up along the border between the U.S. and Mexico. Like many others with family in both countries, I wonder: What do we give up to be both Mexican and American? What do we gain? Perpetual questions about the nature of borders guide me towards projects that embrace bicultural, hybrid ways of being. How does one create a sense of belonging without betraying a multiplicity of identities?

From the moment I first saw a Mexican American debutante dressed as a Colonial heroine, I was immediately captivated. Her extravagant Marie Antoinette-like gown touched me on a visceral level, compelling me to use it as a metaphor to examine the layering of legacy and privilege. Yet the more I learned about the origins of the celebration, the more I was struck by how it places the burden of history on these young girls' shoulders and transforms them into performance artists on a transnational stage. I quickly understood that behind the spectacular dresses, there was an important message here about cultural identity and self-determination. At that point, I knew I had to make this film.

I decided to show this exclusive ritual from the inside out. The film follows two Mexican American girls who are about to debut. For the entire year, the debutantes are treated like celebrities in town as they prepare for their presentation. We, the public, typically get to know them through their pictures in local magazines or waving to us from a parade float. In my film, however, we get to know them much more intimately. I am grateful to these brave young women and their families for opening up to me to tell me their stories.

Like in any closed society, some members were concerned about exposing themselves to criticism. Others understood that I wanted to show why their Mexican-American legacy matters, despite the countless losses endured after the U.S.-Mexican War. I love the simultaneous expression of American patriotism and Mexican cultural affinities, and how Laredo revels in a make-believe celebration that mixes cultures as freely as it mixes historical references. These pop-historic reinventions, role-playing and family allegiances reflect a survival tactic during uncertain times, and have projected an image of Anglo-Mexican harmony, however real or imagined, for more than 116 years.

These days, presenting young women to society is less about producing politically advantageous marriages, than it is about showcasing family status and tradition. Just as women are no longer expected to simply marry and settle down, *Las Marthas* now serve a more complex function when they debut: part spokesperson, part model, part status symbol. In every permutation of the ball, their role continues to be whatever each era requires. No matter what, they have always helped create beautiful memories.

As a society playbill explains, they serve as “amulets against the pressures of the present and the uncertainties of the future.”

The border is usually defined as a region of conflict, poverty and disempowerment. Yet the Latino elite of Laredo wield tremendous power in Texas, one of the wealthiest and most influential states in this country. Even though Nuevo Laredo, their sister city in Mexico, currently suffers from a recent upsurge in drug violence, the Mexican upper class continues to be extremely active in all of Laredo's Society events, especially George Washington's birthday celebration.

In making this film, I discovered that many people are unaware of the sizeable Latino middle and upper class in the U.S. Everyone kept asking me, “How can these girls afford to do this?” There are so many preconceived notions about Latinos, Mexican Americans, and specifically those who live along the border, that I felt it was time we turned some of those assumptions on their head and showed people another way of looking at this community and the borderlands.

There is a popular saying in the Southwest, “We didn't cross the border, the border crossed us.” What happened after the border crossed us? *Las Marthas* presents part of that story.



Cristina Ibarra, Director and Producer of *Las Marthas*



The Film

A little-known celebration takes place in Laredo, Texas, every year. For the entire month of February, the city observes George Washington's birthday with multiple events that run the gamut from jalapeño eating contests to a society debutante ball. In a burst of binational, bicultural exuberance, Laredo pulls out all the stops to honor America's first president, to showcase the close ties between Laredo and its sister city Nuevo Laredo just across the border, and to affirm the friendship between Mexico and the United States. The signature event of the month is a debutante ball—the Colonial Pageant and Ball run by the Society of Martha Washington. **Las Marthas**—which refers to both the Society of Martha Washington and to the debutantes—follows two young women through their elaborate preparations for this most prestigious event.

The Society is almost entirely made up of members who trace their family lineage back to the original Spanish settlers of Laredo or to the earliest Anglo immigrants to the area. The debutantes are daughters, granddaughters, or nieces of members, except one or two guests who are invited to debut, after an application process. The film's featured debutantes are Laura, the latest in a long line of debutantes in her family, whose lineage goes back to Tomás Sánchez, the founder of Laredo; and Rosario, a first-generation invited guest from Nuevo Laredo, whose family moved to the U.S. when she was a child. As the two young women prepare for their debut, behind-the-scenes footage shows the meticulous planning of every detail of the pageant, especially the elaborate gowns each debutante will wear. Overseeing the design and creation of the gowns is Linda Leyendecker Gutierrez, a member of **Las Marthas** with deep family roots in the Society, whose strong personality guides the young women throughout their preparation.

As the months tick down to February, the debutantes choose the colors for their gowns based on their lineage in the Society. The debutante with the longest legacy chooses first. They undergo fittings, hone their social skills at sponsored parties, and practice the logistics of their presentation. Descending the steps on the presentation stage and executing a deep bow are especially

important movements to master in dresses that may weigh as much as a hundred pounds. Interspersed with scenes of preparation are on-screen comments from experts Drs. Norma E. Cantú and María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo who describe the social stratification of Laredo and the significance that the debutante ball has for Laredo's elite. Archival footage and photographs illustrate the historical background and cultural context for the George Washington birthday celebration.

While honoring the first U.S. president, the Colonial Ball and Pageant takes liberties with history, re-creating a "party" of 18th- and 19th-century luminaries, many of whom never actually met. This constructed history provides an opportunity to display the mixed cultural heritage of the residents along the U.S.–Mexico border and helps to reaffirm the ties between the two countries. More significantly, the high-society setting of the debutante ball offers the powerful and the prominent a chance to renew their ties and serves as a reminder of the social and economic class lines that endure in the bicultural milieu of Laredo.



Selected Individuals



Laura Garza-Hovel – Debutante presented at the 2011 Colonial Pageant and Ball, a legacy daughter



María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, PhD – Director of Undergraduate Studies, Department of Social and Cultural Analysis, New York University; Native of Laredo



Rosario Reyes – Guest of Las Marthas, invited to be presented



Norma E. Cantú, PhD – Professor (Emeritus) of English and U.S. Latina/o Literature, University of Texas at San Antonio; Native of Laredo



Linda Leyendecker Gutierrez – Dressmaker; Designer of the debutantes' gowns



Background Information

Laredo and the U.S.–Mexico Border: A Brief History

In 1755, Tomás Sánchez, a Spaniard of noble descent, settled land near an Indian fort on the Rio Grande as part of a Spanish mission to colonize northern Mexico. The colonial settlement was named Villa de San Agustín de Laredo after a town in northern Spain. Later shortened to Laredo, the settlement soon became an important frontier outpost on the lower *Camino Real*, or “King’s Road.”

During its long history, Laredo has seen the jurisdictions surrounding it change several times. According to a popular saying in the Southwest, “We didn’t cross the border—the border crossed us.” After Mexico achieved independence from Spain in 1821, Laredo was in the middle of the new country, whose borders took in the current American states of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, California, and parts of Colorado and Wyoming. Encouraged by the spirit of expansionism that prevailed during the first half of the 19th century, Americans settled throughout Mexican territory north of the Rio Grande—especially in Texas—and as far west as California.

In 1835 and 1836 the Anglo American settlers revolted against Mexico (the Battle of the Alamo is perhaps the best known of that time) and Texas became an independent republic, although the border with Mexico remained in dispute. For a brief time (from January to November 1840) Laredo separated itself from the land debate and established itself as the capital of the short-lived Republic of the Rio Grande, after a Mexican opposition group rebelled against the rule of President Antonio López de Santa Anna and sought to establish an independent nation in northern Mexico. In 1845 the United States annexed Texas, making it the 28th state. The U.S.–Mexico border remained in dispute, and the following year war broke out between the two countries. The war ended in February 1848 with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, in which Mexico ceded the territories that are now part of the southwestern United States, Texas and the state of California, in exchange for \$15 million dollars. In addition, Mexico agreed to accept the Rio Grande as its northern border. Laredo then became a city in the United States, except during the Civil War years, when Texas joined the Confederacy.

One of the oldest border crossing points, Laredo today is America’s largest land port and one of the most populous cities along the border, with a population of 236,091 (2010 census figure) that is over 95 percent Latino.

Sources:

- » <http://militaryhistory.about.com/od/mexicanamericanwar/p/Mexican101.htm>
- » <http://www.ci.laredo.tx.us/history.html>



Celebrating George Washington, Laredo-Style

The Washington's Birthday Celebration Association of Laredo, Inc. (WBCA™) is a state-chartered organization that oversees and coordinates the 27 events that take place during the month-long celebration honoring the first president of the United States.

Events include music, comedy, parades, debutante pageants and formal galas, a carnival, an air show, athletic events, fireworks, and street parties. The centerpiece of the celebration is the Colonial Pageant and Ball run by the Society of Martha Washington, a WBCA™ affiliate organization.

The original celebration was held in 1898, at a time of tense relations between Anglos and Mexicans. In the half-century since the end of the war with Mexico, many Mexicans in Texas had become second-class citizens and victims of racially motivated segregation and lynching. In Laredo, however, Mexicans remained socially and culturally dominant. Anglo immigrants to the area constituted a minority that felt insecure about its political and economic prospects in the border town. Many of them belonged to the Improved Order of Red Men (IORM), which traced its origins to secret societies founded at the time of the American Revolution, in particular the Sons of Liberty, who, dressed as Native Americans, expressed their defiance of English tyranny with the Boston Tea Party. Yaqui Tribe #59—the Laredo chapter of IORM—staged the first Washington birthday celebration with a mock Indian raid on City Hall. Anachronism marked the event even then, and the “raid”

ended when “Pocahontas” brought the parties together to make peace and hand the key to the city over to George Washington.

As the first president of a Western hemisphere country that gained freedom from its colonizer, George Washington was—and still is—revered among Latinos, who regarded him as a forerunner of liberators such as Miguel Hidalgo and Simon Bolivar. That first celebration of his birthday was a hugely successful event which grew over the years. As Anglos and Mexicans intermarried, the celebration of American colonial history took on a distinctly Mexican flavor, becoming the month-long bi-cultural extravaganza that it is today.

Source

» <http://www.wbcalaredo.org/home/>



Miguel Hidalgo—The Father of His Country

Born in 1753, Miguel Hidalgo was a Jesuit priest and leader of the rebellion against the Spanish crown in 1810. Together with military commander Ignacio Allende, he led an army of eighty thousand disaffected peasants, who scored significant victories against the Spanish. He and Allende were eventually captured and executed in 1811. Hidalgo's was the first serious insurrection on Mexican soil against the authority of Spain. A charismatic leader, he fell short as a military tactician. Nevertheless, his leadership had considerable influence on later fighters for freedom and independence. Hidalgo is remembered today as the Father of His Country and the hero of the Mexican War for Independence.

Source

» <http://latinamericanhistory.about.com/od/latinamericaindependence/p/09mhidalgo.htm>

Debutante Balls and Quinceañeras

The debutante ball originated in European royal families and upper-class society as a way of announcing their daughters' eligibility for marriage and finding suitable partners among the young bachelors of similar social standing. The word *debutante* is derived from the French word *débuter*, which means "to lead off"; a debutante is a "female beginner," that is, one who is beginning her life in society. Debutante balls are also known as coming out parties and cotillions.

Today, debutante balls follow a general ritual that may differ based on ethnicity and local culture. Traditionally, the debutante ball features only one young woman, but modern balls are often charity events that present a group of young women. The white ball gown is another tradition that has seen changes as some debutantes opt for color in their presentation gowns. Some sponsoring organizations require their debutantes to qualify on the basis of community service, volunteerism, and academic achievement, rather than their family's position in the community.

Like other traditions such as the *quinceañera*, (see Glossary), the "sweet 16" party, and the bat mitzvah, the debutante ball is a female coming-of-age ritual. But unlike the others, the debutante ball is a strictly high-society tradition that some people consider outdated, no longer relevant in an era of liberated women, whose status is defined by work and career aspirations as much as—or even more than—by marriage. For Las Marthas, however, debutante balls retain a unique relevance for young Latinas with few other opportunities for leadership roles of equal prominence or prestige.

Source

» http://www.ehow.com/about_4684078_debutante-balls.html

Latino Diversity and Identity

Is there a common culture among Latinos in the United States? According to Latinos themselves, yes and no. Perhaps the most obvious connection is a shared history of Spanish conquest, and a displacement from Latin America, often as the result of U.S. imperialism. Yet Latinos are such a diverse population, comprising so many different races, backgrounds and countries of origin, that it is sometimes difficult to find other commonalities. The 2011 National Survey of Latinos (NSL) sponsored by the Pew Hispanic Center found that a majority of Latinos identify themselves by their family's country of origin rather than by the pan-ethnic labels of "Latino" or "Hispanic." About half consider themselves to be different from the typical American, with only 21 percent describing their identity as "American." And while they share a

strong connection to the Spanish language and numerous shared customs, there are also many significant differences that divide the community into splintered groups. Given these divisions, it's important to note where Latinos in the United States come from:

Mexico—63%

Puerto Rico—9.2%

Cuba—3.8%

El Salvador—3.3%

Dominican Republic—2.8%

Guatemala—2.1%

Colombia—1.8%

Honduras—1.3%

Ecuador—1.1%

Peru—1.1%

Diversity among Latinos is based not just on national origin but also on income and class. There are Latinos whose families settled in the American southwest in the 1600s, before the U.S. was even a country, and those who recently crossed the border from Mexico in the past decade. There are rich landowners, high-powered professionals, academics, CEOs of large and small businesses, middle-class white- and blue-collar workers, as well as low-income laborers.

The film highlights the layers of identity that many Latinos experience. Like Rosario, one of the featured debutantes, many have difficulty choosing just one of these identities. Along with class consciousness, issues of identity clearly go beyond national origin and may prompt an examination of what it means to be American.

Sources

- » <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2012/04/04/when-labels-dont-fit-hispanics-and-their-views-of-identity/>
- » <http://tamacc.org/>
- » <http://family.jrank.org/pages/778/Hispanic-American-Families.html>



Glossary

The glossary below defines some of the terms frequently used in discussing culture, class, and identity—themes that run through *Las Marthas*.

Acculturation—a two-way process of change to culture, customs, and social institutions as a result of the meeting and mingling of two cultures

Assimilation—a process whereby people of a culture learn to adapt to the ways of the majority culture; involves the loss of the original customs and traditions of the minority culture, as more value is given to the majority culture

Cultural assimilation—the process by which a person or a group's language and/or culture come to resemble those of another group; can refer to either an immigrant group becoming like the native society or native residents taking on cultural aspects of an immigrant society

Identity—the set of behavioral or personal characteristics by which an individual is recognizable as a member of a group; a person's conception and expression of their individuality or group affiliations

Some familiar ethnic identity labels:

Tejano/a—a Texan of Spanish and/or Mexican descent

Latino/a—an American of Spanish and/or Latin-American descent

Chicano/a—originally a derogatory term referring to the U.S. born children of Mexicans, it was appropriated by the Chicano community during their civil right movement in the U.S. as a way to reflect self-determination against government terms such as “Latino” or “Hispanic,” which favor identification with European roots

Anglo—a white American who is not Latino

Mexican American—a person with U.S. and Mexican citizenship and/or someone who identifies with both countries

Nationalism—a feeling of being loyal to and proud of one's country, often with the belief that it is better and more important than other countries

Privilege—the condition of enjoying special rights or immunities; a right or benefit that is given to some people and not to others; the advantage that wealthy and powerful people have over other people in a society

Spanish words:

Abrazo—a hug or embrace given as a greeting or upon parting

El patrón—the boss

Quinceañera—literally, “fifteen-year-old”; the name given, in Central and South America, to the celebration of a girl's 15th birthday, marking the transition from childhood to young womanhood; varies significantly across countries, with most celebrations including a religious aspect.

Sources

- » <http://www.differencebetween.com/difference-between-acculturation-and-vs-assimilation/>
- » <http://www.answers.com/topic/identity>
- » <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nationalism>
- » <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/privilege>
- » <http://www.quinceanera-boutique.com/quinceaneratradition.htm>



Topics and Issues Relevant to *Las Marthas*

A screening of *Las Marthas* can be used to spark interest in any of the following topics and inspire both individual and community action. In planning a screening, consider finding speakers, panelists, or discussion leaders who have expertise in one or more of the following areas:

U.S. and/or Spanish colonial history

History of the U.S.–Mexico border

Texas history

Historical reenactments

Social stratification

Class consciousness

Cultural traditions

Latino diversity

Chicano studies

Gender roles

Feminism

Cultural identity

Democratic values

Theater/Art

Fashion

3. Have you participated in a coming out ritual like a quinceañera or a bat or bar mitzvah? What value or relevance do these rituals have for people today? What are some of the similarities and differences between these kinds of rituals and debutante balls?
4. Pageants for women, girls, and even toddlers are as popular as ever. What are your opinions of pageant culture and its effects on the young women and girl participants? What other opportunities are (or should be made) available to young women who participate? Explain your viewpoint.
5. Compare Laura and Rosario, the two young women featured in the film. What are their motivations for participating in Las Marthas? What do you think they each hope to get from their participation?
6. From the society daughters to the dressmakers, how are differences in class background presented in *Las Marthas*? What do you think of the young women's views on class?
7. Does the film challenge or reinforce stereotypes about the Latino community in terms of class, gender, or ethnicity? Please explain.
8. Both young women acknowledge that not everyone can be a debutante and participate in this kind of exclusive presentation. Laurita says, "You deal with what you are given and it's up to you what you make out of it." Do you think this exclusivity is an 'American' way of thinking? Does it seem in keeping with democratic principles? Why, or why not?
9. Do you think identity is a bigger issue for people living along the U.S.–Mexico border than for people living elsewhere in the United States? Why or why not?
10. Think of your own identity. How many different ways can you identify yourself? Which is the most important?

Thinking More Deeply

1. What are some of the parallels or differences between those who claim descent from settlers of Laredo and the descendants of other Latino immigrants? Is being aware of family lineage important? Why or why not?
2. Spanish-speaking people come from many different countries. What are the benefits or the detriments of grouping people together under one label such as "Latino" or "Hispanic"?

Suggestions for Action

Together with other audience members, brainstorm actions that you might take as an individual and that people might do as a group. Here are some ideas to get you started:

1. Host a coming out party for your attendees to help them learn about different coming out rituals across cultures. Pair up with a local business to put on a quinceañera, a Jewish Community Center that hosts bat mitzvahs, or an organization that holds debutante balls, for example. Complement the activity with a panel discussion about coming-of-age rituals that addresses the similarities and differences between quinceañeras, bat mitzvahs and/or debutante balls.
2. Partner with a Latino or Chicano Studies department at a local university to invite scholars to your conversation. Consider encouraging the community and local students to support Latino and Chicano Studies programs by enrolling in their classes.
3. Find out about the “first families” in your state or community. This information may be available from the local historical society. You can also find links to some hereditary organizations at <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~cahtgs/society.htm> or by doing an online search of hereditary and lineage organizations.
4. Help a girl develop leadership skills and realize her aspirations. Two organizations offer volunteer opportunities to mentor and empower girls and young women to reach their potential: ToGetHerThere (<http://www.togetherthere.org/girl-leadership-facts>), an initiative of the Girl Scouts of the United States of America, and the Step Up Women’s Network (<http://www.suwn.org/>), which sponsors after-school and weekend programs for teen girls from underresourced communities.
5. Gauge interest in your city becoming a Hispanic Heritage Youth Awards city. The Hispanic Heritage Foundation’s (HHF’s) Youth Awards honor Latino high school rising seniors who have excelled in the classroom and community, and recognize their accomplishments in various categories including STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), health care, education, environment, business and finance, arts, and fitness. The Youth Awards program is the beginning of the HHF leadership pipeline. Get more information at http://hispanicheritage.org/youth_faq.php#faq14.
6. Interested in fashion and costume design? The Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) in New York City has several online exhibits on the Museum at FIT website (<http://www.fitnyc.edu/336.asp>). Additional fashions can be seen in this video (<http://www.academyart.edu/news/articles/watch-school-of-fashions-mbfw-spring-collections.html>) from the Academy of Art University in San Francisco. See samples of the work of two specific theater costume designers at <http://costumede-sign.org/renderings.html> and <http://www.fabiotoblini.com/>.

For additional outreach ideas, visit <http://communitycinema.org>. For local information, check the website of your PBS station.

Resources

» <http://www.itvs.org/films/las-marthas>

This website contains information about the film.

History

» <http://www.pmdgagency.com/webb/?page=llenglish>

This section of the website of the Webb County (Texas) Heritage Foundation provides a history of Laredo, covering industries, public institutions, and religious and social life.

» http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Mexican-American_War.aspx

This article on the Mexican-American War reviews the events leading up to the hostilities, describes the major battles, and provides a brief analysis of the causes of the war.

» <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hdl02>

This section of the Texas State Historical Association's website summarizes the history of Laredo.

Advocacy and Youth Development

» <http://www.aspira.org/>

The nonprofit ASPIRA Association is the only national Hispanic organization dedicated exclusively to developing the educational and leadership capacity of Hispanic youth through partnerships with hundreds of local, state, and regional organizations.

» <http://hispanicheritage.org/>

The HHF's mission is to inspire, prepare, and position Latino leaders in the classroom, community, and workforce to meet America's priorities. The HHF also promotes Latino cultural pride, accomplishment, and the great promise of the community through public awareness campaigns.

» <http://www.laup.org/>

Latin Americans United for Progress is a Michigan-based nonprofit organization that focuses on jobs, education, and youth development within the Latino community.

» <http://www.hermana.org>

Founded in 1974 as the Mexican-American Women's National Association, MANA is a national Latina organization with chapters, individual members, and affiliates across the United States. Its mission is to empower Latinas through leadership development, community service, and advocacy. MANA now includes Latinas of Mexican, Caribbean, Central American, South American, and Spanish descent in all areas of political, social, and professional fields and all walks of life.

» <http://www.girlsforachange.org/>

Girls for a Change (GFC) is a national organization that empowers girls to create social change. GFC inspires girls to have the voice, ability, and problem-solving capacity to speak up, be decision makers, create visionary change, and realize their full potential.

» <http://www.girlsinc.org/>

Girls Inc. develops research-based informal education programs that encourage girls to take risks and master physical, intellectual, and emotional challenges. Major programs address math and science education, pregnancy and drug-abuse prevention, media literacy, economic literacy, adolescent health, violence prevention, and sports participation. A leading advocacy organization, Girls Inc. is dedicated to extending girls' voices, issues, and concerns to policymakers, corporations, and the media.

» <http://lulac.org/>

The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the largest and oldest Hispanic organization in the United States, works to advance the economic condition, educational attainment, political influence, health, and civil rights of Hispanic Americans through community-based programs operating at more than nine hundred LULAC councils nationwide.

» <http://lulac.org/programs/education/>

LULAC's ¡Adelante! America Youth Leadership Program for underserved youth encourages participants to conduct community-service projects, meet with positive role models, and explore alternatives to violence and crime.

Latinos Today

» <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/newswire/2013/upscale-latinos--americas-new-baby-boomers.html>

This market survey report provides a thumbnail sketch of upscale Latinos today.

» <http://www.hispanicmarketinfo.com/2011/08/23/wealthy-hispanics/>

» http://www.hispanicbusiness.com/2007/10/5/the_hispanic_wealthy_the_next_big.htm

These short articles describe the growing number of wealthy Latinos and some of their tastes and preferences.

Modern Debutante Balls

» http://www.denverpost.com/ci_20745012/denver-is-big-debutante-ball-tradition

» <http://articles.latimes.com/2000/feb/27/news/cl-3059>

These articles explain why the debutante tradition endures and also how it is changing.

» <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2006/11/laredo/swartz-text>

This *National Geographic* article from 2006 describes the gilded tradition of Laredo's debutante balls.

» <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/02/23/us/who-s-first-in-their-hearts-on-the-streets-of-laredo.html>

This 2004 article from *The New York Times* focuses on the pomp and circumstance George Washington's birthday celebration.

» <http://www.salon.com/2000/02/24/laredo/>

This *Salon* article from 2000 highlights the border history that lives today through Laredo's traditions.

» <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A40413-2005Feb20.html>

This 2005 article from *The Washington Post* illuminates stark differences between Laredo and Nuevo Laredo's border culture.

Credits

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Independent Television Service (ITVS) funds, presents, and promotes award-winning independently produced documentaries and dramas on public television and cable, innovative new media projects on the internet, and the Emmy Award-winning series *Independent Lens* on PBS. ITVS receives core funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people.

Learn more at www.itvs.org

