

January 5, 2004

Councilman Antonio R. Villaraigosa
14th District
200 N. Spring St. Room 425
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: December 11, 2003 meeting
Mayor's Commission of Olvera Street
Historical Gates at St. Vibiana's Cathedral

Dear Mr. Villaraigosa:

I was present at the above meeting. The "Lemon Law" was briefly cited as a reason to not accept Mr. Dan Giles' generous gift of the above mentioned gates. However, these gates represent significant Los Angeles history and they are culturally relevant.

Although I presently live in Orange County, I was born and raised in Los Angeles. It will always be my hometown.

My parents were Mexican immigrants who met and married in Los Angeles. My father practiced medicine at General Hospital, and he looked after all members of the community, particularly the *Mexicanos* and Mexican Americans in the barrios because they were unable to receive medical assistance. My father also drove to the fields to care for the farmworkers who could not afford or get medical services anywhere. His medical office was on 7th and Broadway, but his office was closed because he contracted tuberculosis and became bedridden for three long years. He never fully recovered his health. Mexicans and Mexican Americans had a disproportionately higher percentage of tuberculosis than other Angelenos because of the deplorable living conditions they had to live in and the lack of medical attention. This, the Great Depression, and the repatriation of Mexican Americans created an almost unbearable existence.

To a very great extent, the people were able to endure the hardships because of Our Lady of Guadalupe's historical and cultural presence in their lives, and they sacrificed greatly to contribute to the building of "the cathedral in her name that never was." What remains today of this past history are the gates that Mr. Giles is willing to donate.

Mr. Giles has offered these gates to Olvera Street with very reasonable conditions. No doctrinal statement is needed, only the display of a copy of the original image, a brief history of the historical event, and an emphasis on the scientific data. This data has nothing to do with religion and it would be of interest to people of no faith and all faiths. Adults and children would be rightly proud of this treasure of the Americas.

I believe Mr. Giles' documentary is going to be shown in many film festivals around the world. These gates could possibly go to another city or nation. Knowing their historical and cultural relevance to Los Angeles, how could you possibly explain not seizing this opportunity to keep them in Los Angeles?

Los Angeles has become a global city. Please keep "the gates" for the world in Los Angeles where they belong.



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