

SUMMER 2022



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CALIFORNIA FREEMASON

SUMMER
2022 VOL 70 NO 03

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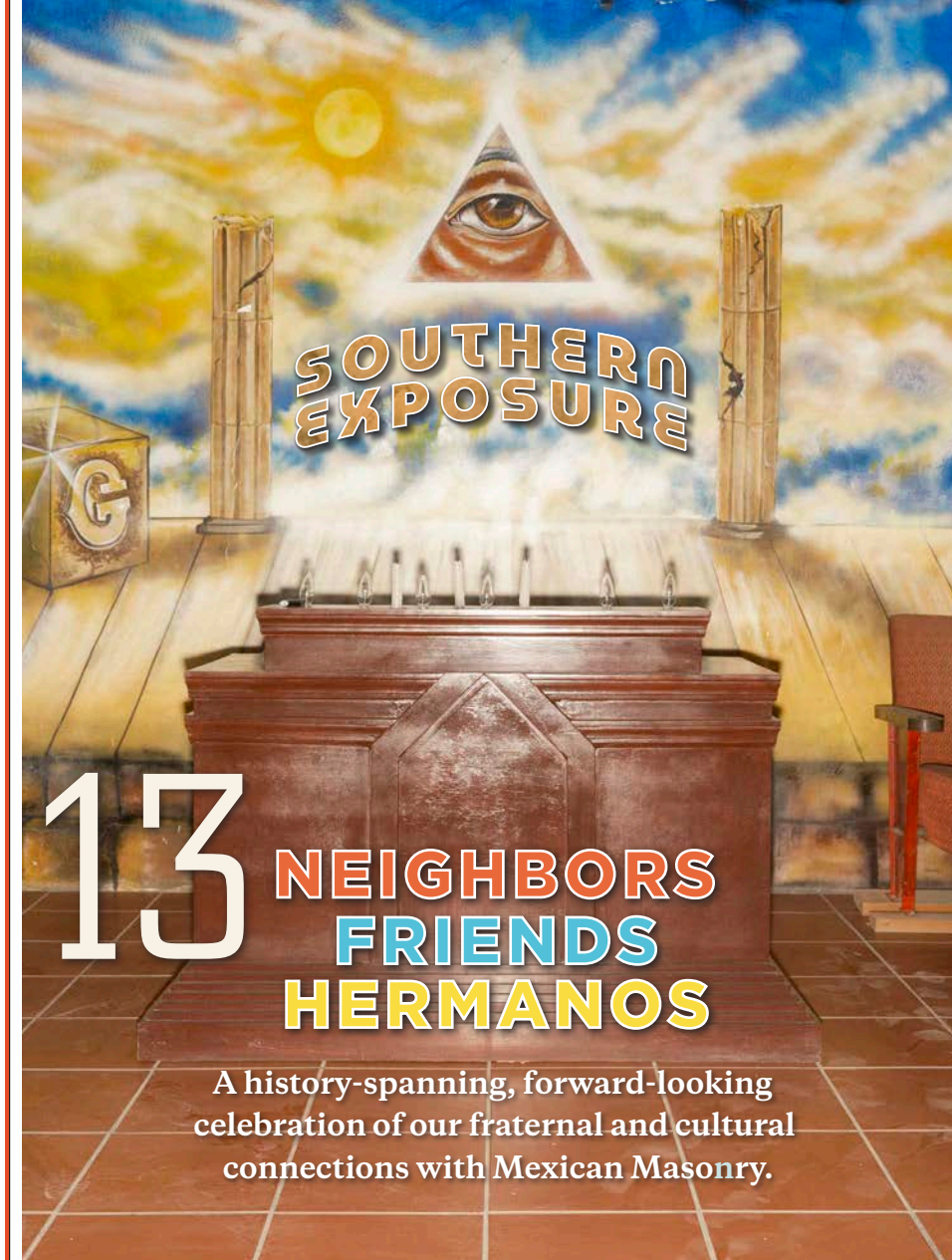
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SNAPSHOT

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Riding the Rainbow

IT WAS A PARTY 100 YEARS in the making. This April in Fresno, members of the International Order of the Rainbow for Girls in California gathered to hold their Grand Assembly and celebrate the organization's 100th anniversary. Living up to their name, it was a colorful affair: Katie Sullivan, the 2022 Grand Worthy Advisor in California, made her entrance on a floral-covered Beetle driven by Dana Regier, the state supreme inspector, as other grand officers cheered her on. "Our pillars are leadership, sisterhood, and service, and that will never change," says Dejah Urbanovitch, the director of leadership for an assembly in the San Fernando Valley. "There are some things that are just timeless." For more about the Rainbow Girls' centennial, [see page 9](#).

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK READ

2022 GRAND WORTHY ADVISOR KATIE SULLIVAN MAKES AN ENTRANCE AT THE GRAND ASSEMBLY. LOOKING ON, FROM LEFT, ARE CRISTINA MORALES, TRIANNA DINGMAN, ANGELINA ROBLES, ABIGAIL FRYE, SAMI MAPLES, KARINA MURUGESU, JORDAN MURPHY, JEANINE REYES, KAMRYN MONTEGNA, HOPE RODRIGUEZ, AINSLEY KAY, AND MEGAN LARSON.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGE

CROSSING BORDERS

Let’s use Freemasonry to build a world in harmony.



IN THIS ISSUE of *California Freemason*, we’re exploring Masonry in Latin America. This has a very special meaning for me. When I served in the U.S. Army in the Republic of Panama, I belonged to **Gatun Lodge**, in the District Grand Lodge of the Panama Canal. While I was stationed there, I met and become friends with many Panamanian Masons, including the members of **Logia Luz y Progreso № 63**, under the Grand Lodge of Panama. The ritual worked in that lodge was the

same as ours, but in Spanish. Meaning that, even with the limited Spanish I spoke, I was able to follow along relatively easily. What transcended language, however, was the shared experience of performing the ritual together. That’s an experience I want to encourage for our members. We have an opportunity to reach out to communities that have been historically underrepresented in our organization and share with them all that makes Masonry great. In doing so, I see us advancing our vision of a world in harmony.

We already know how Freemasonry can meaningfully improve people’s lives. I see that at the Masonic Center for Youth and Families. Counselors there recently partnered with the Pomona Unified School District to provide mental health services to children and teens who have suffered extreme trauma and separation from their families during their journey from countries in Latin America to the United States. It’s a fine example of providing relief to those truly in need, and one I’m incredibly proud of.

I wish you all the joys of the summer season and good health. May the Supreme Architect of the Universe watch over you, your families, and our beloved craft.

Sincerely and fraternally,

Jeffery M. Wilkins
Grand Master of Masons in California

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AFFINITIES

The Lodge on the Playa

FOR MASONS AT BURNING MAN, THE EVENT HAS A SPIRITUAL COUSIN IN FREEMASONRY.

THIS AUGUST, A SERIES of extraordinary events will unfold on a dusty expanse of desert in northwestern Nevada. In a matter of weeks, a town the size of Eureka, California, will be built from scratch, complete with its own power grid, temple, and ranger force. Its population will shoot from zero to 80,000—bigger than the city of Mountain View. And before it’s all torn back down again, the citizens of this overnight oasis will watch and cheer as a 75-foot wooden sculpture of a man is burned in effigy. ¶ Burning Man is a spectacle in every sense. From its origins as an artists’ bacchanal on a San Francisco beach to today’s enormously complex festival, it has had a profound impact on many. ¶ Revelers in various states of elaborate dress—or undress, as the case



THE DESIGN OF BLACK ROCK CITY, THE POP-UP COMMUNITY IN THE NEVADA DESERT THAT HOSTS BURNING MAN, IS BASED ON SACRED GEOMETRY: A CROSS-ROADS WITHIN A CIRCLE WITHIN A PENTAGON.

may be—converge on the playa each year to make, share, and explore impromptu art installations and generally expand their minds. Scorched by the sun and covered in dust, “burners” treat the event as a pilgrimage of sorts, an opportunity to immerse themselves in an environment far beyond their everyday lives.

And for the small group of California Masons who make the annual trek to Black Rock Desert, the echoes between Burning Man and Freemasonry are unmistakable.

“People who attend Burning Man or are involved in something like Masonry are trying to better themselves or learn something at a higher level,” says Kevin Jones, a member of **Logos № 861** in San Francisco and a self-professed

burner. “Some people just want to party, but most are there for a much bigger purpose.” Participants in both scenes are, he adds, “misunderstood in some ways.”

Once you get past Burning Man’s countercultural trappings, the similarities to Freemasonry become apparent. Beyond the

THE ELABORATE TEMPLE IS EVENTUALLY BURNED DOWN, ALONG WITH ALL THE MEMENTOS PEOPLE LEAVE IN IT.



strange and mystical customs, both are about seeking out a higher meaning. For Nick Angelis, a member of **Oceanside-San Dieguito № 381**, the things that drew him to his first Burning Man in 2009 called him to join Masonry the following year. “I wouldn’t be the person I am today if not for Burning Man and for Masonry,” he says.

Both Burning Man and Masonry offer an opportunity to enter a new dimension. That’s typified by the Masonic custom of referring to the lodge room as a “sublime” space and the world outside as “profane.” Carson Duper, a member of **Pacific-Starr King № 136** who was involved in Burning Man’s early years, recalls stepping over a line drawn in the sand as he arrived onsite, and being instructed, “You’re entering a sacred space now.”

The commitment to living up to one’s highest ideals is baked into the ethos of both Burning Man and Freemasonry. The ten principles of Burning Man, espoused by the event’s original organizers, include things like radical inclusion, the idea that any and all are welcome to join. For the small band of Mason-burners, such principles have direct parallels in Freemasonry.

Then there’s the emphasis on ritual. At Burning Man,

participants have developed all sorts of symbolic gestures. One of the most powerful involves placing mementos inside a wooden temple before it and the man are burned to the ground. When they’re set aflame, the tokens—and whatever they represent—disappear forever. “It’s about

“I wouldn’t be the person that I am today if not for Burning Man and for Masonry.”

discarding something from your life and getting rid of it from your psyche,” Duper says.

Says Jones, “The catharsis of burning the man as a community every year is very deep and very spiritual.”

That allusion to shared community is particularly important. More than the elaborate rituals and costumes, the clearest connection Duper sees between Burning Man and Freemasonry is their ability to form tight-knit groups of unlikely friends. “In a way, it’s just an excuse for a community to gather itself around,” he says.

As Burning Man returns for 2022 (following a gathering in the “multiverse” in 2020 and an unauthorized, renegade conclave last year), many Mason-burners say they hope the old spirit of the event remains. And for those thinking of venturing into the desert for the first time, Angelis offers this: “Just like with Masonry, with Burning Man it’s like a choose-your-own-adventure book. There’s everything for everybody.” No matter what, Angelis says, “You’re going to have an eye-opening experience.” ✨



LUMINARIES

A Dream, Deferred

150 YEARS LATER, AN EFFORT TO RECOGNIZE A VISIONARY SAN FRANCISCO CHARACTER AND LEGENDARY FREEMASON.

IT WAS AN AUDACIOUS PLAN, coming from a suitably audacious source. The year was 1872. Joshua Norton, the beloved San Francisco eccentric, Freemason, and self-proclaimed Emperor of the United States and Protector of Mexico, had issued yet another of his frequent “proclamations” to be published in the local press. This time his dispatch outlined his vision for a massive new infrastructure scheme. “We, Norton I, Dei gratia Emperor ... order that the bridge be built from Oakland Point to Telegraph Hill, via Goat Island,” he wrote, using the earlier name for Treasure Island.

What he was describing is today called the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge. One hundred and fifty years later, John Lumea is on a mission to give credit where it’s due.

Issued more than 60 years before the completion of the bridge, Norton’s proclamation—one of hundreds he’d pen over 20 years—stands either as an amazing bit of foresight or the ravings of an unhinged dreamer. As is often the

case when it comes to Emperor Norton, the truth is entirely in the eye of the beholder.

Lumea knows where he stands on the matter. As head of the Emperor Norton Trust, he's on a yearslong mission to formally recognize the Emperor's legend by having Norton's name affixed

people of San Francisco and figuring out how to help," Lumea says. "He was able to navigate that in a way that really endeared him to people."

This year, the sesquicentennial of Norton's three bridge proclamations, Lumea feels that the time has finally come to recognize him by adding his name to the bridge. It wouldn't be nearly as unusual as it sounds, he says: More than 30 bridges in California have ceremonial names—including the Bay Bridge, whose western span is named for former mayor Willie Brown.

For all of Norton's well-chronicled peculiarities—he was often pictured in a military costume, epaulettes, and a beaver-fur hat—he was ahead of his time on matters of immigration, race, and urban development. (He also proposed a subway tube beneath the bay, 100 years before BART made it a reality.) For that reason, Lumea says, Norton stands as a sort of 19th-century forerunner to the city's famous countercultural tribes—the bohemians, beatniks, and hippies. "In all these proclamations,

he's talking about things like equality and tolerance and the common good," Lumea says. "These things became adopted as values of the Bay Area, and the Emperor is talking about them in the 1860s."

Whether or not that thinking was influenced by Freemasonry is an open question. Regardless, the fraternity was clearly an important part of his life. Norton joined Occidental No 22 (now **California No 1**) in 1854, and by 1855 was listed in the *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge* as a Master Mason (suggesting he either progressed quickly through the degrees or affiliated after receiving them elsewhere). He remained connected to the lodge until being suspended in 1859, likely for nonpayment of dues. That's not surprising: Despite his immense popularity, following a disastrous business caper that left him bankrupt in 1854, Norton lived in a constant state of near-destitution.

Though he died without rejoining the lodge, it was a fellow Mason, Joseph Eastlund, later the head of Pacific Gas and Electric and a member of California No 1, who donated the funds to have Norton buried at the old San Francisco Masonic Cemetery. A century and a half later, his fellow members' embrace of Norton at both his heights and depths remains endearing, Lumea says. "It certainly says good things about the Masons." —IAN A. STEWART

"In all these proclamations, he's talking about things like equality and tolerance and the common good."

to the bridge. Norton, a failed businessman turned oddball-about-town, was a cultural fixture in 1860s and '70s San Francisco who rubbed shoulders with artists and writers including Mark Twain and Frank Soulé, who along with Norton was a member of **Occidental No 22**. Today, he's celebrated as a sort of patron saint of the fraternal order E Clampus Vitus. "Even though Norton was known as this bombastic character, his concerns were always about the

EMPEROR NORTON I, A BOMBASTIC FIGURE OF EARLY SAN FRANCISCO, ENVISIONED BOTH THE BAY BRIDGE AND THE TRANSBAY TUBE—DECADES BEFORE EITHER CAME TO PASS.



CENTENNIAL

A Century of Change—and Continuity

RAINBOW GIRLS TURNS 100, WITH A FOCUS ON THE FUTURE.

WHEN THE INTERNATIONAL Order of the Rainbow for Girls was founded in 1922, two years after women earned the right to vote, it aimed to build in its members a sense of "good citizenship and sound character."

Now, as the Masonic youth order celebrates its centennial, there's an opportunity to look back on all that's changed—and all that hasn't. Because with Rainbow, there remains a strong sense of tradition that leaders say is part of the appeal. "Our pillars are leadership, sisterhood, and service, and that will never change," says Dejah Urbanovitch, who joined in 1998 and now works with an assembly in the San Fernando Valley. "Some things are just timeless."

That feeling permeates the organization. Of course, it's most

FACES OF THE RAINBOW



Sandra Day O'Connor, first female Supreme Court Justice



Dorothy Metcalf-Lindenburger, NASA astronaut



Olympia J. Snowe, former U.S. Senator (R-Maine)

visible in the dress code, which mandates floor-length or "tea-length" dresses, depending on the context. Rather than stand out as anachronistic, these elements can be a draw, members say, particularly at a time when tradition has become an anomaly. However, the order's greatest value lies in the camaraderie and mentorship its members offer.

Every two weeks, they get hands-on training in leadership competency. They create budgets and proposals for events, discuss how to better their communities, and learn strong public-speaking skills. Each year the grand worthy advisor (the highest-ranking youth member) chooses a statewide service project that members organize around all year long. Recent projects include fundraising for food

MEMBERS CELEBRATE AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, HELD THIS SPRING IN FRESNO.

banks, helping families in need of housing, and raising money for cancer research and care.

Colleen Penaluna, who joined the Roseville assembly at 12 and served as grand worthy advisor in 2015-16, says those skills helped her land a job out of college. "Understanding that you have tangible experience makes you feel so much more confident when you go into that interview, ask for that raise, or start your own business," she says.

Today there are 53 assemblies active in California. As with many other service groups, that's a far cry from its peak in the 1970s. While Rainbow's leaders are acutely aware of the challenges facing organizations like theirs, they're adapting as best they can. Dana Regier, the supreme inspector of the California chapter of Rainbow Girls, points to how members use social media to promote events and stay in touch. There's also Beyond the Line, an online leadership-training program. So far it has an 85 percent participation rate. Among the skills it covers is image management, particularly relevant in the internet era. Both, Regier says, are examples of Rainbow adapting to the times.

That said, those close to the organization hit a familiar, and old-fashioned, refrain when discussing Rainbow's future: a sense of seeking, belonging, and finding purpose. "At the end of the day, they're all just girls trying to navigate the world to the best of their ability," Urbanovitch says. "That's never going to change." —DREA ROMER



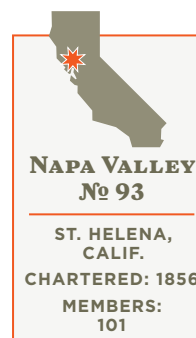
LODGE PROFILE

The Civic Center

AT NAPA VALLEY № 93, A LODGE USES ITS HISTORIC HOME TO PAY IT FORWARD.

LEGEND HAS IT, when in 1892 Captain Matthew Ritchie set his sights on constructing the grand new building in downtown St. Helena that would bear his name, he did so with an eye to the sky. Ritchie, a member of what was then called St. Helena № 93, had made his fortune in the Gold Rush, and intended to lease out his new building to serve as the lodge's meeting hall. He also wanted it to make an impression on the town. "The Odd Fellows had just constructed their hall across the street," explains past master Hector Marroquin. "The Masons wanted to make sure theirs was taller."

Richie succeeded on that front. And for the subsequent 130 years, the ornate Queen Anne building



(named the Richie Block) has remained the literal high point of this slice of Napa County. At four stories tall and about 16,000 square feet, the building is still the tallest in downtown. "It was about more than just pride," Marroquin says. "They wanted to make sure the lodge stood as the cornerstone of the community."

That it has, and not just visually. Today, members of **Napa Valley № 93**—the name

change reflects the consolidation of several wine country lodges in the 1990s—take pride in their group's civic zeal. Members continue to donate to local causes, including the St. Helena Unified School District, sports leagues, and the Boys and Girls Clubs, among others. They've also counted

MEMBERS OF NAPA VALLEY № 93 POSE ON THE FACADE OF THE IMPRESSIVE RICHIE BLOCK BUILDING IN DOWNTOWN ST. HELENA.

among their members an unusually large number of city and government officials.

So when in early 2020 the pandemic began to take its toll, the lodge decided to tap into its greatest asset—the Richie Block—as a way to help the town.

Ever since the lodge purchased the building in 1973, it has relied on income from office and commercial tenants. "At the onset of the pandemic, we met to discuss how we could help without hurting ourselves too badly," says Mikal Litzza, the senior warden. The hall association, which manages the building, decided to offer tenants occupying three retail spaces on the ground level and seven offices on the second floor a lifeline: They remitted 90 percent of the monthly rent. By summer that number had shifted to 75 percent, and in 2021, it was 50 percent for the year. The adjustments proved auspicious, Litzza says. "When other business owners downtown saw what we were doing, they started to remit rent for their tenants, too."

All told, the move saved the building's tenants more than a quarter-million dollars, allowing them to retain a dozen employees who might otherwise have been laid off. "In the end, we decided we'd rather see our community come out of the pandemic strong than make money off them," Litzza says.

Despite the loss in revenue, the lodge hasn't shirked its other philanthropic obligations. "We always remind ourselves that we have to avoid getting complacent and remain relevant to our community," says Samuel Maffei, the lodge master. In 2020 and 2021, the lodge donated \$60,000 to charity, including scholarships for members of the Masonic youth orders, continued support of the Masonic Homes, and local public schools. When the local fire station had to stop hosting blood drives because of social-distancing restrictions, the lodge donated use of its spacious hall every other month.

Thanks to its stunning building, just about everyone in St. Helena knows about the local Masons. But, Maffei says, it's lodge members' actions that have made the greater impression. "Our worth isn't about brick and mortar," he says. "Ultimately, it's measured in the impact we have in our community." ♦ —ANTONE PIERUCCI

MORE ONLINE!

CHECK OUT A SPECIAL VIDEO PROFILE OF THE LODGE AT CALIFORNIAFREEMASON.ORG/NAPA93



ESOTERICA

Who's in Charge Around Here, Anyway?

SUDDENLY, REFERENCES TO SHADOWY, ALL-POWERFUL SOCIETIES SEEM TO ABOUND.

THE FORCES THAT SHAPE our world, from pandemics to Tik-Tok crazes, are unknowable indeed. Or are they?

If you've been watching TV or movies lately, you might be forgiven for thinking twice about that question. Because—call us crazy—but it sure seems like we're suddenly surrounded by references to secret societies steering world events. First, in late 2021, came *Dan Brown's The Lost Symbol*, Peacock's streaming adaptation of the best-selling prequel to *The Da Vinci Code*, with its not-quite-accurate portrayal of Masonry, murder, and intrigue. (For more, see californiafreemason.org/lostsymbol.) Then, in May, *Dr. Strange in the Multiverse of Madness*—partly filmed inside Freemasons' Hall in London—introduced Marvel fans to a new superhero-run secret society that rules an alternate-reality version of Earth. And now, Netflix's farcical comedy series, *The Pentaverse*, takes it a step further: Its benevolent secret society, complete with robes, masks, and elaborate initiation rituals, attempts to solve the world's biggest problems, from the Black Plague to global warming.

So what's with all these allusions to the Illuminati, the legendary (and legendarily misunderstood) quasi-Masonic order? Who knows. Perhaps in an era rife with conspiracy theories and online misinformation, there's something reassuringly old-fashioned about a group of elite overlords guiding affairs from behind closed doors. But as any Mason worth his salt knows, that's got nothing to do with us. ♦ —/AS

"So what's with all these allusions to the Illuminati?"

PHOTOGRAPH BY WINNI WINTERMEYER



MEMBER PROFILE

Crafting His Message

AN ANNOTATED GUIDE TO A MASONIC-INSPIRED MUSICAL OFFERING.

WHEN ALEJANDRO LABORDE first learned about Freemasonry, he was intrigued but skeptical. A lifelong spiritual seeker, he connected deeply to its humanist messages. But, he says, “I didn’t do groups. I was more searching for my own path.” Finally, a visit to **Panamericana No 513** (and later **Oasis No 854**) won him over. “I realized it’s about finding God within yourself—knowing yourself, working on yourself,” he says. The message resonated, and in the years since it has found its way into his songwriting—including his 2016 track “Te Iluminarás.” Here, the Latin folk guitarist explains the meaning behind his lyrics. ✦ —IAS

Te Iluminarás

Alejandro Laborde and Auras ¹

Soy un humilde obrero / pero uso
sombrero si se presta la ocasión /
Voy por el mundo entero /
se usar el dinero y lo comparto
con amor / A tí yo te amo y
quiero / y con mucho esmero yo
te canto mi canción

Cuando a veces tropiezo solo me
levanto / Sacudo los huesos y sigo
mi canto / Viviendo el momento /
Todo lo que tengo contigo mi
cielo / La vida me sabe mejor

De donde soy no existen
fronteras / tienes tu vivienda y
también tu / habitación /
Hoy voy por esta carretera /

¹ “I’m into a lot of metaphysical stuff. Being in a band, you’re always exchanging different energies and perspectives. Each member has their own aura. When you put them together, you get these different combinations of colors and energies.”

y paso a paso más me acerco
a tu corazón. / Así yo te amo
y quiero / y todo lo que tengo
lo comparto con amor

Luna, luna, luna buscas la
verdad / Entre las estrellas
tú la encontrarás / Luna, luna,
luna sigues sin cesar / Entre
tantos soles te iluminarás /
Te iluminarás

Te iluminarás /
Te iluminarás /
Te iluminarás

You Will Be Enlightened (English translation)

I am a humble worker / But I
wear the hat ² if the occasion
arises / I go all over the world /
I know how to use money and
I share it with love ³ / I love you,
and I want you / And with great
care I sing you my song

When sometimes I stumble, I
just get up / I shake the bones
and continue my song / Living
the moment / All I have with
you my love / Life tastes better
to me

Where I’m from, there are no
borders ⁴ / You have your home
and also your room / Today
I’m going down this road / And
step by step, I get closer to your
heart / So, I love and I want you
And everything I have I share
with love

Moon, moon, moon, you seek
the truth / Among the stars
you will find it / Moon, moon,
moon, you go on and on /
Among so many suns, you will
be enlightened ⁵ / You will be
enlightened

You will be enlightened /
You will be enlightened /
You will be enlightened

²

“I say I’m a humble craftsman, but I wear the hat if necessary. As the senior warden, I have had the opportunity to sit in when the master is out.”

³

“For the past 22 years, I’ve worked with adults with disabilities. You cannot take for granted your ability to walk or talk or understand people. I find that to be a part of brotherly love; to see that in other humans.”

⁴

“I’m interested in spirituality, alchemy, the esoteric sides of religion. I started visiting the Self-Realization Fellowship of Paramahansa Yogananda. It has a lot of similarities to Freemasonry. At their temple, there’s a plaza with the symbols of all different religions. The message is it’s OK to come from different backgrounds. It’s about finding God within yourself.”

⁵

“The song is about my journey through the degrees. We talk about light as knowledge or wisdom. It’s not about religion. It’s more universal than that. With my music, I try to speak to everyone. And if it touches you in some way, that’s the goal—to inspire people to be more friendly, more peaceful.”

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

NEIGHBORS, FRIENDS, HERMANOS!

In Mexico and California, a picture of two fraternities joined at the hip.

BY IAN A. STEWART

Members of Logia Simbólica Cuauhtémoc No 15 in Tijuana—a sister lodge of La Jolla No 518—pose for an Instagram moment.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MATTHEW REAMER

COURTESY OF ALEJANDRO LABORDE

SAUL ALVARADO ALREADY HAD a good idea about what Freemasonry was capable of, even before he joined it. He'd seen the effect it had on his father-in-law's life, how it helped him navigate sobriety. But when he read up on the fraternity, he began to learn more about its importance to Mexican history. Just as the founding fathers of the United States were Freemasons, so too were the heroes of the Mexican Revolution and the War of Independence. "It was like, wait a second, Mexico has Masons, too?" he recalls thinking. "That really gave me the nudge to learn more. It made me want to get more involved."

Alvarado isn't the only person who's felt that pull of kinship. Freemasonry has a long and distinguished history in Mexico, though it's one that for many in California—including many Mexican Americans—largely remains a mystery. Yet it's also an enormous opportunity for those who, like Alvarado, see in Freemasonry a way not only to make friends and improve themselves, but to forge connections across borders and deepen their understanding of their culture and history. "Learning about all these figures who were Masons, it opens you up in a different way," he says. "It opens another dimension of pride."

Mexican Masonry isn't just a quirk of history. It remains alive and well south of the border, as well as in enclaves throughout California, Texas, and the Southwest, as it has for more than a century. Increasingly, California Masons are looking for opportunities to highlight that tradition and support the growth of Latino participation more broadly. Says Alvarado, "We need to extend this. We need to open Masonry up to the Latino community and celebrate what Freemasonry has meant to our heritage."

LOOKING NORTH, LOOKING SOUTH

This July, a group of Mexican and American Masons will attempt to do just that. Representatives from the grand lodges of California, Baja California, and Baja del Sur will meet in San Diego for the yearly Conference of Three Californias, which has taken place every year since 1979.

The conference is an opportunity to share new developments and best practices, says Arturo Sevilla, the grand secretary of the Grand Lodge of Baja California. It's also a way to celebrate an important partnership that transcends borders. The highlight of the event is a degree presentation put on by the host lodge. For those in attendance, being able to sit together in that setting is a powerful reminder of the global bonds tying members together. "It's good to know how

Masonry operates outside our borders," Sevilla says. "It makes our Freemasonry more cosmopolitan."

As lodges begin to envision a post-pandemic future, the conference is also serving as a possible preview of the fraternity's next evolution in two countries. "Moving forward, as we're talking about ways to adapt to improve diversity and inclusion in California, I see this as an important step," says Arthur Salazar, who as junior grand warden is on track to become California's first Latino grand master. "We can build so much more when we welcome other cultures within our communities. I see this as a challenge and an opportunity."

And an important step in meeting that challenge is saluting the deep Masonic legacy found within those members' cultures. For Masons like Alvarado, that's a real point of pride.

A FABLED HISTORY

The story of Freemasonry in Mexico is practically inseparable from the country's political history. The craft first arrived there in the late 18th century through Spanish military lodges. The first permanent Mexican lodge was formed in 1806, and within a few years several more had been established, made up primarily of the country's European-born ruling classes. It was in these lodges that much of the liberal Enlightenment views of the time were propagated throughout Mexico.

By the end of the War of Independence in the early 1820s, a growing network of Masonic lodges had been installed in Mexico. From the very beginning, however, Mexican Masonry was weighted with the political rivalries that would dominate the country for the next hundred years. In lieu of traditional parties, Mexico's political battles played out in lodge rooms, with Scottish Rite lodges tending to represent the centralists (conservative, Catholic, aligned with Europe). Meanwhile, the liberal federalists gravitated toward lodges working under the York Rite or the Mexican National Rite (pro-democratic,



A statuette holding Masonic working tools breaks free of its chains at the Oaxaca Masonic Temple.

Window to another world: A special view inside the Oaxaca Masonic Temple of the Gran Rito Nacional Benito Juárez.

"It's good to know how Masonry operates outside our borders. It makes our Freemasonry more cosmopolitan."

anticlerical, aligned with the United States). Each side's political hierarchy was essentially reproduced within the respective lodges. From Benito Juárez and Porfirio Díaz to Francisco Madero and Lázaro Cárdenas, nearly every president of Mexico for 100 years

belonged to one of the dueling Masonic bodies.

That connection became even more pronounced during the Mexican Revolution of 1910-20, as lodges morphed into de facto organizing bodies dedicated to promoting the

new government's social reforms. In 1929, President Emilio Portes Gil, a future grand master of Mexico, declared that the "state and Freemasonry in Mexico had become the same thing."

CHANGING TIMES

That's no longer the case. In the decades following the Mexican Revolution, Masonry began to recede from the public spotlight. Lodges became less involved with government affairs, and their influence in civic life waned. Unsurprisingly, the Masonic population in Mexico has also dwindled. In 1929, one estimate suggested a membership of about 10,000, out of a



population of 17 million. Today that figure is nearly 20,000 (not counting irregular lodges, of which there are several) out of a population of 128 million—about a quarter of its relative size a century ago.

Masonic jurisdiction in Mexico is now divided amicably between 31 state-level grand lodges and a separate national grand lodge. Despite that patchwork of organizing bodies, Sevilla says, Freemasonry in Mexico today hardly resembles the factional hot-house it was for most of its history.

Still, Mexican Freemasonry retains a distinct flavor—one quite unlike what's practiced in the United States. The first and most obvious difference is the ritual. California (and most U.S.) lodges use the Preston-Webb ritual, which bears some similarity to the York Rite's craft degrees. While the York Rite still exists in Mexico, today the vast majority of lodges issue the first three degrees of the Scottish Rite. Also, Mexican Masonry places enormous emphasis on esotericism and philosophical study, says Andres Francisco Leon, a member of the Grand Lodge of Tamaulipas and past master of **Cedros del Libano № 79** in Nuevo Laredo, just across the border from Texas. Candidates often spend years progressing through the degrees and are expected to produce written essays demonstrating their understanding of the ritual. Additionally, lodge rooms in Mexico tend to be more elaborately furnished than those in the United States. Most lodges also feature the signs of the zodiac painted onto brightly colored walls.

For all that grandeur, "Masonry in Mexico tends to be very solemn," says Daniel Velazquez, the grand

chancellor of the Gran Logia Occidental Mexicana in Jalisco and a member of **Jacques DeMolay № 52** in Guadalajara. "Most lodges I've attended, they get mad if you cross your legs or take out your cell phone. It's a very serious place."

TWO COUNTRIES, ONE FRATERNITY?

For all the shared history across the border, for generations the fraternity in California was not especially welcoming to its southern neighbors. Until fairly recently, few Mexican American members were ever admitted into California's lodges.

While membership has never been formally closed to anyone on the basis of race, nationality, or ethnicity, Masonic lodges have historically reflected many of the same prejudices found elsewhere in society. Because lodges didn't keep records of members' ethnicity, it's impossible to track Latinos' historic share of overall membership. But during the early and middle part of the 20th century, it was sufficiently small that Leon Whitsell, in his study *One Hundred Years of Freemasonry in California*, pointed out that **Golden Rule № 479** in San Jose was "one of the relatively few

lodges to have a native Hispanic Californian on its rolls. And it has not one, but two." That was in 1950.

Though lacking visibility with the Grand Lodge of California, Mexican Masonry has long flourished in the state, particularly around Los Angeles, where for decades so-called "irregular" lodges have existed. These lodges have slightly different traditions and rules than do those organized under the Grand Lodge of California, and are not formally recognized by it. As such, members of the two bodies are not permitted to sit in on one another's meetings. For much of the 20th century, however, irregular lodges were the source of practically all Masonic activity among certain ethnic groups in California—particularly in Black, Latino, and Filipino communities.

In 1930, the Grand Lodge of California published a study in the *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge* of these ethnic lodges. That year, it identified 20 Mexican lodges organized under the Supremo Gran Oriente del Rito Nacional Mexicano. Another three groups were part of the Grand Lodge Benito Juarez of Torreon, which in 1932 appealed to the Grand Lodge of California for formal recognition. Later, a splinter group

Below: Grand Master Tomas Galguera inside the Oaxaca Masonic Temple of the Gran Logia Benito Juárez García. Opposite: Grand Master of the State of Baja California Armando López Acosta presides inside Logia Simbólica Cuauhtémoc № 15 in Tijuana.

THE GRAND TOUR OF 1890



TRAIPSING 2,500 MILES through the desert by rail in a three-piece suit might not be for everyone. But for the special delegation of California Masons dispatched to Mexico in 1890, it was the trip of a lifetime. The group toured lodges and attractions in Arizona, Texas, and down into Mexico, where it met with Gen. Porfirio Díaz, the Mexican president (and Freemason).

To see more, visit californiafreemason.org/1890.





A Masonic lodge officer in Tijuana shows off his regalia.

to believe that many of their members are of good Masonic material,” it reported. The motion, however, was not passed. It would be another decade before the next breakthrough.

THE MOTHER TONGUE

Eventually, that moment arrived. In 1959, Grand Master Phil Myers issued a dispensation to **Maya Lodge No 793** in Los Angeles. Though the lodge would perform the ritual in English, it was envisioned as a haven for primarily Mexican American members. It wasn’t until 1993 that it received special permission to perform its first degree ceremony in Spanish. (For more, see page 29.)

In 2005, a dispensation was issued for a second Spanish-speaking lodge, **Panamericana No 849**. (In 2008, it consolidated into Panamericana No 513.) A third Spanish-speaking lodge emerged in 2017, **Fraternidad de los Americas No 867**, though its charter was later revoked.

Through those lodges, Latinos have increasingly established themselves within California Masonry. In 2020, a survey determined that 23 percent of California members were of Latino descent. That figure includes Filipino members with Hispanic surnames, so the true membership descending from Latin American countries is likely lower. Either way, it’s well short of the state’s overall demographics, but also a far cry from the early days.

In addition to those members, California Masonry includes an estimated 35 irregular Mexican-style lodges, which serve an almost exclusively Latino membership. For many, there’s a sense of hope that

the next chapter of Masonry in the state will include finding a way to incorporate those members. “We have a great opportunity to welcome them into the fold,” one California member says. “They want and need the structure of the grand lodge, and they come with a wealth of knowledge. It would benefit us all.”

Salazar has spent a lot of time thinking about that issue. Increasing the diversity in California’s lodges, especially among Latinos, is key to strengthening the fraternity, he says. That hasn’t always been easy. Salazar says even he was initially skeptical about approaching a lodge, since so few of its members looked like him. While much has changed since then, Salazar believes there’s plenty of room to grow. “When I think about diversity, it’s not about recruiting for the sake of a quota,” he says. “We’re talking about making sure every part of our community knows we bring something of value. If our Latino community hears that message, I think it will resonate.”

THE NEXT CHAPTER

That’s why Salazar is bullish on the Conference of Three Californias and other partnerships like it. An international connection is a powerful idea for many members, especially those with family on both sides of the border. More and more, it’s a bond that members are experiencing. Examples of California and Mexican lodges supporting one another are increasingly common. Many Southern California lodges have even established sister-lodge programs with their Mexican counterparts. Among them are El Centro’s **Imperial Valley No 390** (with **Palingensia No 46** of Mexicali) and **La Jolla No 518** (with **Logia Simbólica Cuauhtémoc No 15** in Tijuana). Others, including **Downey United No 220** and **La Mesa No 407**, have similar partnerships.

Says Salazar, “When I look at the larger picture of Freemasonry, it’s wonderful to know you can travel to any country, any state, and be welcomed. It shows our lodges that there’s nothing to be feared from inviting other cultures into our experience.”

Velazquez has seen that up close in his travels throughout Mexico and the United States. It’s left him with an ever deeper appreciation for Freemasonry. “When you go to a lodge in another country and see someone you haven’t met before, he’s going to call you a brother,” Velazquez says. “It makes you feel like you’re part of something that’s very ancient and very big. So I feel like I have a responsibility to keep it going and to keep it great.”

Five Times the Members, Half the Age

In Argentina, an explosion of Freemasonry.

LIKE THE REST of South America, Argentina’s history of Freemasonry can be traced back to the country’s independence movement in the mid-19th century. But in just the past decade, the country has seen a burst of Masonic activity: From only 2,200 members in 2008 to more than 10,000 today, representing 400 lodges that can be found in virtually every province. Grand Master Pablo Lázaro explains the sudden growth spurt. —IAS

YOUNGER MEMBERS, YOUNGER LEADERS

In 2008, the Grand Lodge of Argentina lowered the minimum age of membership to 18. At the same time, it made a sustained push to improve its visibility on social media. Crucially, the fraternity also worked to provide younger members with opportunities for leadership. The result is that the average age of members today is almost half what it was a little more than a decade ago. “Today we have young men of 22, 23 years occupying [lodge officer] positions,” Lázaro told *La Nacion*. “That is to say they are entering from the age of 18 and 19.”

EMBRACE DEBATE

Argentinian Masonry places special emphasis on debate within the lodge. There, lodges tend to congregate around shared interests like political science, technology, or classical music. At lodge meetings, members present lectures delving into current events related to those topics. Masonic debating custom dictates that those in attendance may only speak in favor of the lecture; in the case of disagreement, a completely new paper must be prepared and presented in a subsequent meeting.

OPENING THE DOORS

To counter longstanding prejudices and accusations of secrecy, Argentinian lodges have made an effort to open themselves to the public. While the ritual and ceremonies remain private, the organization is increasingly inviting outsiders in, including inside the elaborate Grand Lodge building in Buenos Aires. The temple now participates in a citywide “Night of the Museums” through its Museo Masónico Hermano José de San Martín.



Logia Masónica Hijos del Trabajo No 74 in Buenos Aires.



OLIVER TORREALBA TORRES

Maya No 793, Archimedes No 871 Francisco de Miranda Lodge, Venezuela

How did you first learn about Freemasonry in Venezuela?

My father was in the military, and the command he belonged to was stationed in the Villa Santa Ines, which was the home of Joaquín Crespo Torres, the former president of Venezuela and sovereign grand commander of the Supreme Council of the Scottish Rite in Venezuela. I grew up playing and running around there, and it taught me a lot about Freemasonry. I suspect that my father was a Mason too, but he never told me anything about it. Years later, I joined a military lodge in Caracas, before I came to the United States.

Is the connection between Masonry and Venezuelan history widely celebrated?

In Venezuela, like all Latin American countries, we celebrate our history with fervor. When you read about the revolution, our leaders were all Masons. Many of our founding fathers, like Simón Bolívar, were Masons, and their speeches are full of Masonic words and ideals. José Antonio Páez, a hero of the revolution, was grand master of Venezuela. Even our flag has Masonic elements—the three colors, the seven five-pointed stars.

Is there something about Venezuela’s culture that Masonry fits into very well?

For us as Latin Americans, Masonry is more than just a place for fraternity or for becoming better men. It represents a connection to our history and to our family and ancestors. Being a Mason is a way to set an example for your family to follow. It means placing a column of pride that can sustain your family during adversity. Saying that my father or grandfather was a Mason is saying that they were a worthy example to follow.



THE LIBERATORS

In Latin America's revolutionary movements, Masons were front and center.

WHEREVER THERE'S REVOLUTION, there's almost always a Freemason leading the charge. That's certainly the case when it comes to Latin American history. Here's a rundown of a few of the most important. —JUSTIN JAPITANA AND TONY GILBERT



SIMÓN BOLÍVAR VENEZUELA ▲

Born in Caracas, in what is now Venezuela, Bolívar is the most important figure of the South American independence movement. He is responsible for liberating from Spain the nation of Gran Colombia—what would become Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Panama—and later Peru and Bolivia, which is named for him. Bolívar was initiated into Masonry in Cadiz, Spain, in 1803, and raised in 1806 at **Mother of St. Alexander of Scotland Lodge** in Paris. In April 1824, Bolívar received the 33° of honorary inspector general in the Scottish Rite. He founded and served as master of **Protectora de las Virtudes Lodge No. 1** in Venezuela, and founded the **Order and Liberty Lodge No. 2** in Peru in 1824.



JOSÉ MARTÍ CUBA ▲

The national hero of Cuba, Martí was a poet, journalist, and philosopher who advocated for the abolition of slavery. He is still widely seen as the father of Cuban independence. Martí's Masonic credentials are somewhat murky, but evidence suggests he was raised as a Master Mason in **Armonía Lodge No. 52** in Madrid in the early 1870s.

JOSÉ BONIFÁCIO BRAZIL

Known to Brazilians as the Patriarch of Independence, José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva was a statesman who played a key role in securing Brazil's independence from Portugal. He supported public education, was an abolitionist, and helped found Brasília, the national capital, in Brazil's underdeveloped interior. Bonifácio also served as grand master of the Grande Oriente do Brasil in 1822 and helped unite the country's many politically oriented Masonic organizations.



BENITO JUÁREZ MEXICO ▲

A liberal politician, a lawyer, and one of the most famous figures in Mexican history, Juárez was Mexico's first indigenous president and led the restored republic following the French invasion of the country. Juárez was initiated into Masonry in 1847 in **La Logia Independencia No. 2** of the Mexican National Rite (which now bears his name). In 1854 he received the 9°, and in 1862 he received the 33°. Every January 15, a ceremony is held to celebrate his legacy by the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons in Mexico.

BERNARDO O'HIGGINS CHILE

Born in Chile of Spanish and Irish descent, O'Higgins helped lead the Chilean War of Independence. In 1817, he became the supreme director of Chile and in 1823 helped liberate Peru alongside Simón Bolívar. O'Higgins was strongly influenced in the 1790s by the influential **Great American Reunion Lodge** of London, established by the Venezuelan revolutionary figure Francisco de Miranda, which was dedicated to an independent Latin America.



MIQUEL HIDALGO MEXICO ▼

The "Father of Mexico" and a hero of the Mexican War of Independence, Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla was a Catholic priest-turned-resistance leader. He is best remembered for his 1810 speech "Grito de Dolores," or "Cry of Dolores," which called for the end of Spanish colonial rule in Mexico. In 1806, Hidalgo, who was influenced by liberal ideas from the United States and Europe, was initiated into the first regular Masonic lodge in Mexico, named **Logia Arquitectura Moral**.



TOUSSAINT L'OUVERTURE HAITI

Haiti provides the only example in history of a population of enslaved people who rose up to become an independent, self-governing nation. They were led by the freedom fighter Toussaint L'Ouverture, who ended slavery there decades earlier than did any other country in the Americas. L'Ouverture was born into the complex racial caste system of the French colony of Saint Domingue. After buying his freedom, he began training troops when revolution broke out. His trusted inner circle were Masons, and according to historians, so too was L'Ouverture, evidenced by his signature, which featured three dots in a triangle. ✧

Masonic lodges and
monuments in Cuba
are easy to spot.

HAMMER, SICKLE, SQUARE, COMPASS

On one Briton's visit to Cuba, architectural marvels offer a tantalizing clue into the island's Masonic history.

BY DARMON RICHTER

THE FIRST THING YOU SHOULD KNOW is that Freemasonry is a big deal in Cuba.

I was **on a bus** when I first began to notice it, somewhere **on the road** between Aguada de Pasajeros and Santa Clara. It was a hot, dusty day, and as the antique vehicle chugged along, I gazed out the window, watching a rolling landscape of yellowed grass and palm groves, unfinished buildings and the occasional flag-flying monument to the revolution. We passed through a village, its wide streets lined in the usual **mélange** of Soviet-era concrete and colorful, crumbling Spanish Colonial architecture. Suddenly, my eyes landed **on one building** that stood out from the rest, a **burst** of turquoise, red, and gold—more elaborate than anything else on the street. As the bus rattled past, I noticed the emblem carved in bold strokes above the front door: a square and compass, framed by a glorious golden starburst.

The sign immediately distinguished this as a Masonic lodge. Usually such places do little to announce their presence. In Western Europe, Masonic lodges tend to be more conservative affairs. They are grand buildings, very often, but discreet enough that their function doesn't become apparent until you can make out their symbols and plaques. This Cuban lodge, on the other hand, was the most garish, colorful thing in town.

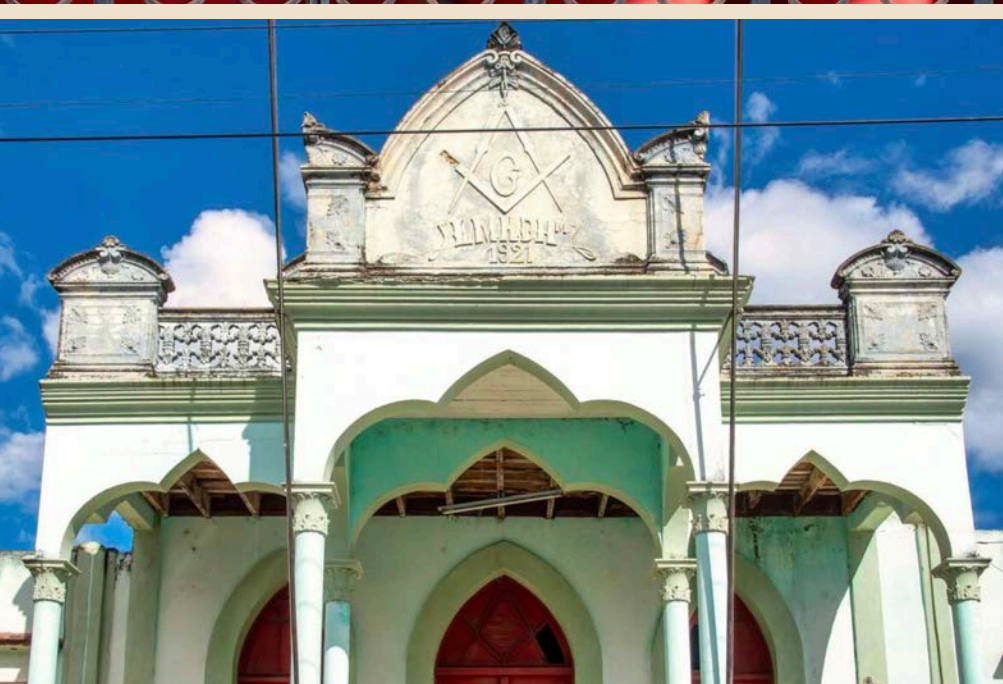
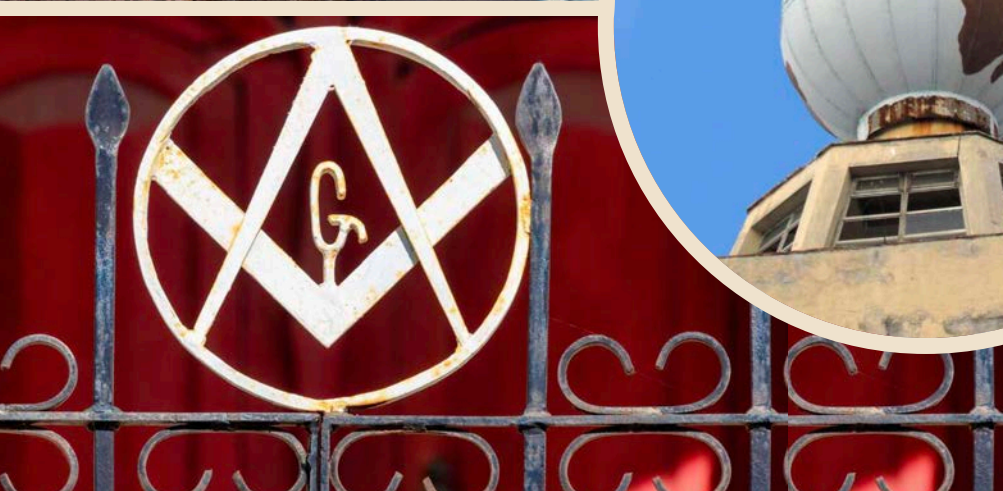
It was at that point I remembered I was traveling through a Communist state, and my brain did a

somersault. Because as far as I knew, Freemasonry had been outlawed by virtually every Communist party of the 20th century. For example: The Grand Lodge of Yugoslavia was “put to sleep” from 1940 to 1990. In Bulgaria, Freemasonry was banned by the 1940 Law for the Defense of the Nation, and subsequently active and even past Freemasons were frequently accused of being agents of foreign intelligence services.

Freemasonry was outlawed in the Soviet Union, too, and while some of the leading Communist revolutionaries had been members of Masonic lodges, they denounced the craft after seizing power in Russia. The general consensus seemed to be that such a system was incompatible with the new mode of Marxist society. As I looked out the window of that humid, rattling bus, however, it seemed as though Cuba disagreed.

That roadside carnival of a lodge was no aberrancy, either, as I'd discover during the rest of my stay in Cuba. Now that my eyes were open, I began noticing them everywhere—collecting them, even. I spotted the **Logia Luz del Sur** and **Logia Aurora del Bien** in Trinidad, on the south coast of Cuba; **Logia José Jacinto Milanés No 21** in Matanza; **Logia Hermanos de la Guardia** in Cifuentes; and **Logia Asilo de la Virtud** (the “asylum of virtue”) in Cienfuegos.

They dominated town squares; they burst in colorful formations of pillars and plaster façades from



otherwise plain village streets. Far from outlawing Freemasonry, Cuba appeared to be celebrating it. So I decided to do some digging and find out why.

LUZ DEL SUR: A BRIEF HISTORY OF FREEMASONRY IN CUBA

The fact is that Cuba is home to a flourishing Masonic community. In 2010, it was reported that the island had more than 300 Masonic lodges and more than 29,000 active members. The fraternity first appeared there in 1763 and grew as French Masons fled the Haitian Revolution of 1791.

The first part of this story is nothing peculiar. The former colonies of the Caribbean have long been a hotbed of Masonry. But the Grand Lodge of Cuba is

remarkable in that it thrived under a Marxist-Leninist dictatorship. One of the popular (if unverified) theories for that is that Fidel Castro may have been a Mason.

When the revolutionaries landed on Cuba in 1956—the Castro brothers, Che Guevara, and the rest, all 82 of them squeezed onto a 12-berth yacht named *Granma*—the island was under the tyrannical rule of Fulgencio Batista. The story goes that Castro and his brother were hidden from Batista's forces by a small Masonic lodge in the Sierra Maestra. It was from this remote lodge that Castro laid the foundation for his 26th of July Movement, which in 1959 would ultimately lead to the socialist revolution in Cuba.

Some say Castro himself was initiated as a Mason during that time. Others suggest that it was only

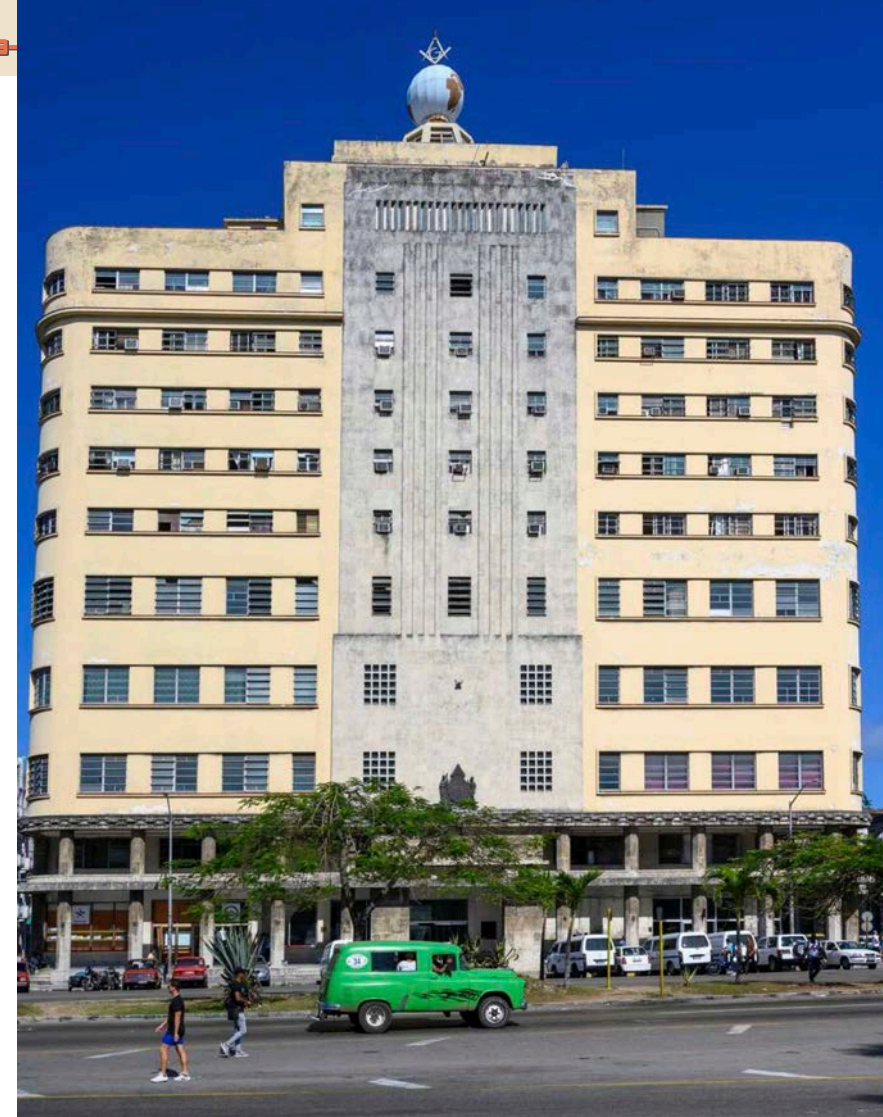
Raúl Castro who joined, or some of the revolutionary fighters. Either way, the kindness and support allegedly given to Castro during those years by a remote Masonic community offered a popular theory for the tolerance Castro's regime would later show toward Cuban Freemasonry.

It's certainly a good story, although the truth might be simpler; after all, Cuba already owed a great debt to its Freemasons. During the island's struggle for independence from Spain, many of Cuba's leading revolutionaries were proud Masons, including Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, Antonia Maceo, and the famous poet, journalist, and philosopher José Martí. It would have been exceedingly difficult for the regime to separate the memory of Cuba's national heroes from the ideas they had openly celebrated.

"Afro-Cuban faith and Freemasonry...both played a role in consensus-building after the revolution," writes the folklorist E. C. Ballard. "The first was useful to gain support from the largely Afro-Cuban population of the island who remain poorly represented in the government. The second ensured the sympathy of the Latin American left."

As a result, Freemasonry in Cuba remained legal, though it was monitored by the Office of Religious Affairs. Membership numbers rose after the fall of the Soviet Union and Castro's government eased restrictions on the craft, allowing the opening of new lodges and even permitting Masons to participate in public ceremonies dressed in full regalia.

Some elements of Cuban Masonry are notable for their differences. In general, for instance, Masons' dress code in Cuba tends to be fairly relaxed, and



The towering Grand Lodge of Cuba dominates the Avenida Salvador Allende in Cuba.

women are sometimes admitted to lodges. Ballard speculates that such adaptations are "welcomed generally in a society which formally eschews bias and discrimination of any kind."

Today, more than a third of Cuba's Freemasons are based in Havana, where the impressive Grand Lodge building dominates an entire city block, daubed in esoteric symbols. This is the nucleus of Cuban Freemasonry, the nerve center from which all 316 Cuban lodges are regulated; and after my week of road-tripping through the cities of the south, I was eager to pay it a visit.

EL GRAN LOGIA DE CUBA

Back in Havana, I spent a morning wandering the city's main cemetery, Necrópolis Cristóbal Colón. Containing row upon row of polished marble, the necropolis was founded in 1876 by the Spanish. As I traversed the endless parade of bleached-white stone, I found a mass of esoteric epitaphs among the grave markers. Lodges gathered their dead together, wrought-iron fences separating the deceased into memorial plots according to Masonic custom. The

symbols of the craft were easy to spot.

In the afternoon, I set out for the Grand Lodge of Cuba at 508 Avenida Salvador Allende, a towering 11-story structure that, before the appearance of a new wave of tourist hotels in the capital, was the second-tallest building on the island. (The avenue itself was named after the 30th president of Chile—a Marxist, Freemason, and good friend of Castro's.)

I spotted the Gran Logia almost the moment I turned onto the avenue. I had cut through backstreets on my way there, under washing lines and spider-webbed telephone cables, where children played baseball in the street. And then, suddenly, there it was. Pontiacs and Corvettes pattered up and down the avenue, while at the far end, rising clear of the colonial blocks and arches, a yellow titan broke the horizon. It was every bit as subtle as the village lodges I'd seen, 11 floors of budget Art Deco capped off with a globe, a square, and a compass.

Established in 1955, Havana's Masonic headquarters contain the office of the grand secretary, a museum, a home for elderly Masons, and an extensive library (though, according to rumor, the Cuban government has since commandeered most of the floors for its own use). I got close—close enough to admire the zodiac clock set into the building's facade—but despite my best efforts, I couldn't get inside.

A gentleman in suit and glasses stood between the doors and greeted me with a quizzical smile. I'd been told the library was open to layfolk. I gestured past him, toward the interior of the building, and said "¿Por favor?" while flashing the best smile I could manage. I was answered with a motion of genteel refusal.

Not wanting an argument, I stepped away, only to run into a man who'd been watching the entire affair. The man was 60 perhaps, with a sun-weathered face and the wiry body of a farmworker. I'd noticed him as I arrived in the park, raking leaves while puffing on a cigar. "Hector," he said with a mischievous smile, and shook my hand.

We exchanged pleasantries, and then I decided to swing for the fences. *Was Fidel Castro a Freemason?* I asked him. He laughed.

"Perhaps," he said, blowing a cloud of smoke. "Who knows?"

"Hector," I said, "are you a Mason?"

Hector puffed thoughtfully on his cigar for a moment, his head half lost in the clouds. "If I am not, I would tell you no," he replied. "But if I am, I would also tell you no." Then he laughed enigmatically, and I decided to leave it at that. ♦

"Afro-Cuban faith and Freemasonry...both played a role in consensus-building after the revolution."



EDGUIN CASTELLANOS
Panamericana No 513
King David No 5
(Belize)

I understand that the lodge you first joined in Belize has an interesting history.

Yes, many lodges in Belize were "quasi-Masonic." My lodge, Star of King David No 5, belonged to the Independent United Order of Scottish Mechanics. The degrees are very similar to Masonry, except the symbols are related to mechanics, not stonemasons. We wore the apron and had all the same signs, and most of the rituals were the same. It was popular in the Caribbean and former English colonies, but these days it's a

dying organization. So with some friends from Mexico, which is 20 minutes north, we regularized the lodge to Freemasonry. I was part of that change.

What was the biggest change for you when you first experienced California Masonry?

In Belize, we worked in English, so when I came here and joined Panamericana No 513, I had to learn the ritual in Spanish, which was challenging. I knew a bit of Spanish, but more like what we'd



call "kitchen Spanish"—just enough to get by. It's also a different ritual. It's similar, of course, but in terms of execution, it's a completely different ball game.

Besides the ritual, is the lodge experience much different?

In Latin American Freemasonry, there's a huge emphasis on esoteric work. Here, it's more philanthropic. In our countries, we invest lots of time in everything spiritual and esoteric. That's a huge draw there. ♦

The Rite Stuff

Exploring the many Masonic rituals of Latin America.

UNLIKE THEIR COUNTERPARTS in the United States, Masonic bodies in Latin America historically have embraced ritualistic diversity. A result of the region's British, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and U.S. colonial influence, this approach spawned a wide array of Masonic practices. Here, Diego Arana and Tadeu Matheus, the regional secretaries for Central and Latin America of the Quatuor Coronati Correspondence Circle, offer an overview of some of the most notable rites found south of the border. —MICHAEL RAMOS

SCOTTISH RITE

Found in: All Latin American countries

The Scottish Rite is the most common Masonic system in the world—including in Latin America. Whereas many American Masons are familiar with its fourth through 32nd degrees, in Latin America the vast majority of lodges also confer the rite's first three (or "craft") degrees. The rite grew out of various French "high degree" systems and was exported throughout Europe and the new world. These "red" lodges were largely brought to Latin America by French and Spanish military groups.

YORK RITE

Found in: Argentina, Chile, Mexico

This system comprises three bodies that members pass through after completing the craft degrees: the Royal Arch Chapter, the Royal and Select Master Council, and the Knights Templar Commandery. Also known as the American Rite, it's most widely practiced in the U.S., from which it was introduced to Mexico in the 1820s. In the 20th century, the rite was revived in Mexico through a series of English-speaking expat lodges. That grand lodge still exists, today comprising some 20 "blue" lodges.

NATIONAL MEXICAN RITE

Found in: Mexico

The seeds of this rite, consisting of nine degrees, were planted in revolutionary France, but found their full flower in Mexico in 1825. Like all 19th century Mexican lodges, the rite struggled for survival amid political upheaval, but ultimately survived and still exists as one of the most distinctive systems of Masonry in Latin America. Similar to the French Rite, the National Mexican Rite tends to feature an adogmatic approach to the craft, including a long history of women's and coed lodges.

EMULATION RITUAL

Found in: Argentina, Brazil, Chile

This ritual was formed in England following the union of the Premiere and Antient grand lodges in 1813. Today, it remains one of the most common rituals there and in countries where the United Grand Lodge of England has been or remains active.

SCHRÖDER RITE

Found in: Brazil, Chile

Developed in early 19th-century Germany, the Schröder Rite has a small presence in South America thanks to the German community there. A unique aspect of this ritual is its penchant for humanism, which focuses on the responsibility and impact of the human race instead of the divine or supernatural. Its unique blend of philosophy is distinctive among Masonic rituals.

MEMPHIS-MISRAIM

Found in: Dominican Republic, Ecuador

Memphis-Misraim is a blend of several Masonic rites and is sometimes referred to as the Ancient and Primitive or Egyptian Rite. Formalized in Italy in the late 1880s, in some countries, it can contain up to 99 degrees. Generally unrecognized by mainstream Masonic bodies, it's often worked in coed lodges and has an interesting history filled with quasi-Masonic celebrities, such as the Italian military hero General Giuseppe Garibaldi and the occultist Theodor Reuss.

ADONHIRAMITE RITE

Found in: Brazil

This rite, developed in France in the 18th century, supposedly takes its name from the biblical figure of Adoniram, whom some consider to be the true architect of King Solomon's Temple. The rite consists of up to 12 degrees, similar to the Scottish Rite, terminating with a form of the Rose Croix degree. Its teachings propagate the idea that Freemasonry originally stemmed from the Middle and Near East. It's been worked in Brazil since the early 19th century.

FRENCH RITE

Found in: Brazil

This rite has an incredibly rich history. It was born in 18th-century France and has since found popularity in Brazil and elsewhere. The rite consists of seven degrees and has been embraced by many coed lodges and other continental-style Masonic bodies. The rite professes some unique lessons that trace to the earliest days of Freemasonry. ✦

WHERE MASONRY WENT POP

In Brazil,
Freemasonry is
everywhere you
look—if you know
what to look for.
BY ADRIAN SPINELLI

ONCE YOU BEGIN TO SEE the signs of Brazil's infatuation with Freemasonry, you can't stop seeing them. There are the obvious ones, of course—the bumper stickers, signet rings, and lodge banners that are common to just about every part of the country. But look a bit deeper, and you're overwhelmed with subtle hints of a cultural phenomenon that hasn't just survived in the seat of South American power, but has thrived.

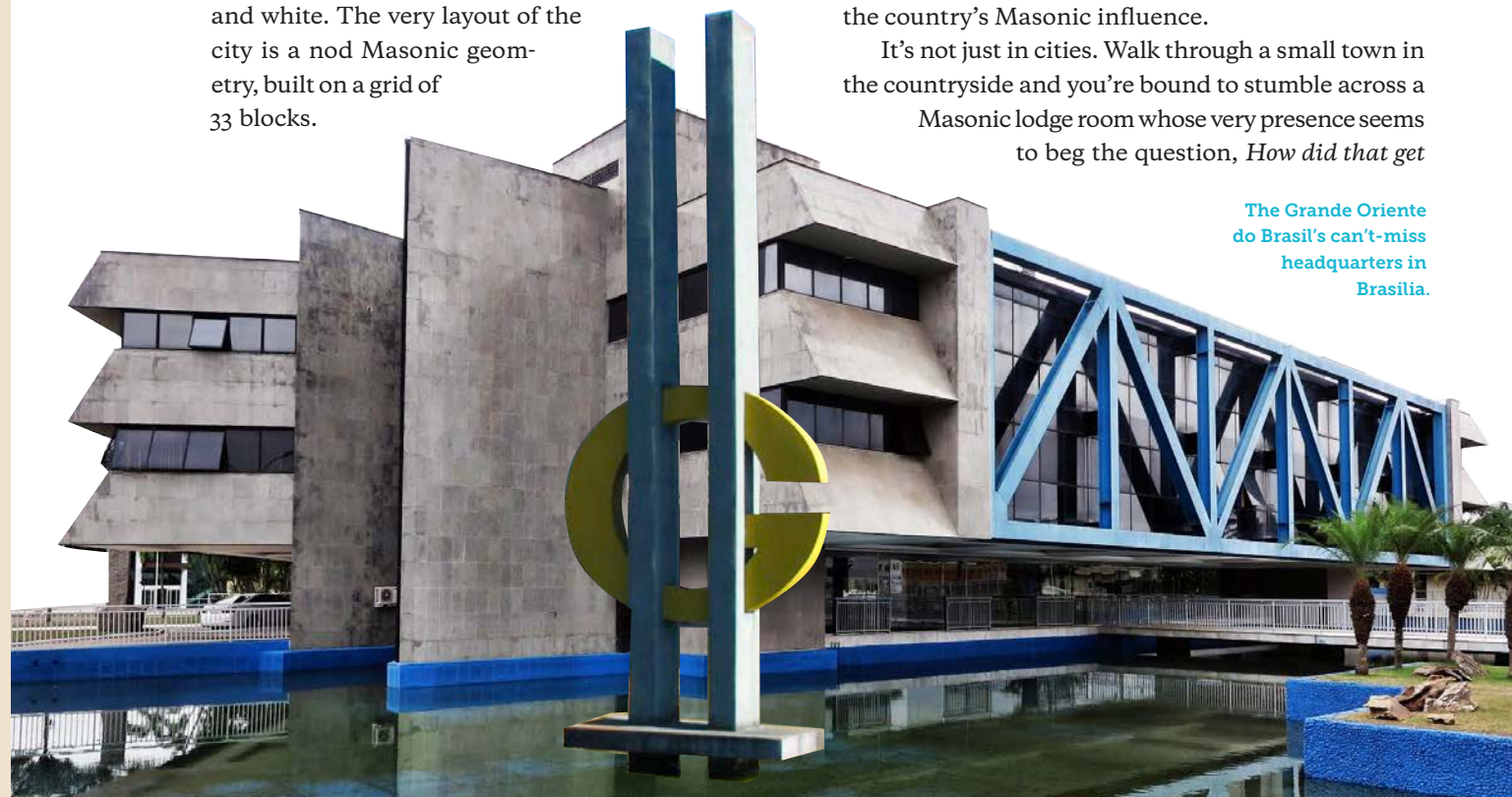
In Paraty, a Unesco World Heritage site and coastal tourist destination in the state of Rio de Janeiro, the cues are even more prevalent. Constructed by Portuguese Freemasons 250 years ago, the city is like a shrine to Masonry. Streetlights and building columns are engraved with geometric ciphers and painted blue and white. The very layout of the city is a nod Masonic geometry, built on a grid of 33 blocks.

Above the city flies its distinctive and Masonic-inspired flag, featuring three stars in a triangle.

These days, Brazil increasingly bears the marks of a country where Freemasonry is in the ascent. Whereas worldwide membership in the fraternity has generally been in decline, it has exploded in Brazil. There are more than 6,000 lodges in the country today. In the state of São Paulo alone, there are more than 800 lodges just affiliated with the Grande Oriente do Brasil—the largest of several Masonic governing bodies in the country. (São Paulo and California have similar-sized populations; by comparison, the Grand Lodge of California has just over 330 lodges.) Those numbers keep growing, too. And with them, so too do the outward manifestations of the country's Masonic influence.

It's not just in cities. Walk through a small town in the countryside and you're bound to stumble across a Masonic lodge room whose very presence seems to beg the question, *How did that get*

The Grande Oriente
do Brasil's can't-miss
headquarters in
Brasilia.



here? Why has Freemasonry spread like wildfire in Brazil but not in, say, Ecuador? Like so much about the country, the answer lies in a complex blend of cultural and historic forces.

A PROUD HISTORY

Freemasonry has played a key role in the country's history. The first emperor of the republic, Dom Pedro I, was a committed Mason who, upon declaring independence from Portugal in 1822, named his advisor and fellow Mason, José Bonifácio, the first grand master of the Grand Oriente do Brasil.

The connection was fundamental to 19th century Brazil, says Monica Dantas, an associate professor at the Universidade de São Paulo and an expert on fraternalism in South America. Masonic lodges were a "privileged space," she says, where Brazil's founding fathers could "formulate a strategy for independence without being in the public eye." In the absence of political parties or a robust university system, lodges acted as an important vehicle for spreading new political thought—including the abolition of slavery.

That history still looms large in Brazil, which this year will celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Grand Oriente. And unlike in many other countries, discretion has not necessarily been part of the equation. Members proudly display their lodge affiliation and often go to lengths to acknowledge one another in public. Masonry in Brazil, in other words, is hard to miss. In fact, the current vice president, Hamilton Mourão, recently appeared on the country's largest TV network to talk about Masonry. (A clip showed him at his lodge; when he appeared in studio, the house band welcomed him with a Masonic anthem.)

BOOM TIMES

Growth has been a major trend in Brazilian Masonry, particularly in the 21st century. The economic boom years of the early 2000s were crucial to that expansion. According to the World Bank, the size of Brazil's middle class more than doubled in the space of a decade. At the same time, interest spiked in Freemasonry. From 2003 to 2009, the Grand Oriente do Brasil (GOB) added nearly 500 lodges and 14,000 members. By 2013, between the national and state grand lodges, there were more than 213,000 Masons in Brazil spread across 6,500 lodges, making it one of the largest Masonic populations in the world. The bicentennial celebrations being held in each state have brought even more attention to the fraternity.

According to Gerald Koppe Jr., the deputy grand chancellor of foreign Masonic relations for the GOB, that membership growth has brought the average age of Brazil's Masons down dramatically. Today, he says, the median age of new members is 28. "We're initiating a lot of 20- and 21-year-olds, and we receive a lot of college students through outreach work with the universities," he says. Additionally, Masonry is popular among the members of Brazil's armed forces, further skewing its membership's age downward.

However, demographic trends can't fully explain the growth of Freemasonry in Brazil. For many, the answer lies in its members' ability to marry Masonic brotherhood with the Brazilian thirst for social life. That, says one member, explains the growing number of lodges in small towns, where Masonry can foster community networks and structure that are otherwise lacking. "People are proud of being known as a Mason," he offers. "It's a real badge of honor." ♦



ROGERIO GOMES

Santa Monica-Palises Nº 307
Lux Sapientiae Nº 264 and
Primeiro de Setembro Nº 461, Brazil

Brazil has one of the fastest-growing Masonic communities in the world. What do you attribute that to?

In Brazilian culture, to become a Mason is seen as a way to grow personally, professionally, and as a leader. So people come in looking for that. But then the longer they're in the lodges, the more they learn about the philosophical teachings and the mystery of Masonry, and that's what keeps them there. And then of course there was also the *Da Vinci Code*.

Is Masonry very visible in Brazil?

Absolutely. The city I'm from has probably 100 lodges. In general, you can look at someone in Brazil and say, I know this guy's a Mason because he'll put three dots in his signature, or because he wears the pin on his jacket. If you're driving on the road and someone sees your Masonic bumper sticker, they'll honk their horn three times at you, to say hi. Brazil is very social. People want to make friends, and this is a way to make friends.

Does Masonry in Brazil reflect the country's Catholic heritage?

Oh yes, to the point that I know of many Catholic priests who are members—people who are very rooted in the diocese. I'd say that in Brazil, most lodges take you on a very spiritual journey to become connected to something even greater than yourself. That attracts a lot of people. And I think Catholicism and the symbols of Masonry have a lot in common. ♦



Culture Clubs

At California's two Spanish-language lodges, the connections run twice as deep. By Ian A. Stewart

FEDERICO JIMENEZ WILL NEVER FORGET his first experience in a Masonic lodge room. It was the early 1950s, in Aguascalientes, Mexico. Over dinner, he found himself seated beside the governor of the state. Rather than lord over the banquet, however, the governor served Jimenez—along with all the rest of the ranchers and tradesmen there. "They said, 'In here, everybody is equal,'" Jimenez, now 92, recalls.

Years later, Jimenez was still moved by that memory. So after he immigrated to California, he sought out the local Masons. As it turned out, he had friends with connections to a Spanish-speaking lodge in L.A. His friend could even serve as his *padrino*, or reference. And in 1969, despite speaking very little English, Jimenez reached out. Half a century later, he's still an integral part of the lodge.

That's a fairly common story at California's two Spanish-language lodges. At **Maya Nº 793** and **Panamericana Nº 513**, both in Los Angeles, members

with ties to Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, and South America have created a special niche within California Masonry. Members there are able to celebrate and emphasize their heritage, reconnect with family customs, and keep traditions alive. Whether it's recent immigrants or folks who've been in the United States for generations, the two lodges offer something that can be found nowhere else: a Masonic *familia*.

"The minute I came into the lodge, I felt like I was at home with my family," says Christian Sermenio, master of Panamericana Nº 513. "When I'm there, I feel like I'm surrounded by all my *tíos*."

A CULTURE WITHIN A CULTURE

It isn't just the language that sets California's Spanish lodges apart. Members there have built on traditions from a wide range of countries. The result is a unique blend of cultural and fraternal customs that's

Members link arms at Panamericana Nº 513 in Los Angeles.

PHOTOGRAPHS
BY MATTHEW
REAMER



Members of Panamericana No 513 form a chain of unity.

unique to California but representative of the lodge members' diversity.

"It's very spirited, very loud, and very fun," says Edguin Castellanos, a past master of Panamericana No 513 who was born in Belize. "That can be a turnoff for some people, but we're from Latino homes. That's part of who we are. That's what I fell in love with, that rich spirit."

The connection transcends individual nationalities. More than half of the two lodges' membership was born outside the United States. Among the countries represented there are Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Bolivia, Peru, Cuba, and Chile. For many, Freemasonry has been a way to establish social connections in a new country. It's also a bridge back

home, to family and friends in the fraternity abroad.

That bond is often deeply personal. Sermeno, for instance, first joined **Vista No 687**, north of San Diego. As he progressed through the degrees, however, he sought a way to follow in the footsteps of his grandfather, who'd been a lodge master in El Salvador. Joining Panamericana No 513 and learning the ritual in Spanish was a way to feel closer to him.

Those family ties are a source of immense pride for many. When Oliver Alejandro Torrealba Torres was raised in **Yolo No 195** in Davis, a contingent from Maya No 793, where his father belongs, made the trip north to support him. In a nod to his

family's Venezuelan heritage, his degree was scheduled for June 24—that country's independence day (and also the feast day of St. John the Baptist). The significance of the date wasn't lost on him.

Then there's the simple matter of being around familiar faces. "There isn't a very big contingent of Latinos in California Masonry," says Edwin Torres, a charter member of Panamericana No 513. "For the most part, these are the only lodges where, as Latinos, we see people who look like us."

LONG ROAD HOME

Establishing that home away from home has been the project of generations. In the early 1950s, the Grand Lodge of California for the first time assigned

a special committee to scout for interest in forming a Spanish-speaking lodge, to complement the state's existing French-, German-, and Italian-speaking lodges. However, the issue proved contentious. Many within the fraternity argued against expanding foreign-language lodges, on the basis that they divided members along ethnic lines. In 1957, an affinity club led by the late Aurelio Gallegos of **Covenant No 527** requested permission to form a Spanish-speaking lodge. The request was denied.

Gallegos and company were undeterred. And in 1959, the group did successfully charter a new lodge, Maya No 793. The lodge was not allowed to work in Spanish, which was still banned by the *California Masonic Code*. Regardless, it became the first lodge under the Grand Lodge of California to be specifically geared toward Latinos.

The idea proved popular. From an original membership of 54, Maya No 793 grew rapidly. In its first decade, the rolls doubled in size. By 1975, that necessitated a move to a larger meeting space, and the lodge purchased a hall in Monterey Park. By 1983, the lodge had reached a high of 189 members.

Importantly, it also took on an informal ambassadorship role in Latin America. In 1982, its past master, Alejandro Navarro, served as the grand master's representative at the National Masonic Congress, held in Mexico. The lodge became a regular guest of its counterparts across the border. "It was really impressive," Jimenez remembers. "We had a good relationship with the lodges in Mexicali and Baja. Every seat in the lodge room was taken."

SPANISH FOR BROTHERHOOD

Despite the lodge's success, it wasn't until 1992 that it finally fulfilled its founders' hopes. Forty years after the matter had been voted down, Gallegos again introduced legislation to allow Maya Lodge to recite the degrees in Spanish. Evidently, attitudes had changed in the intervening years. It passed.

Today, Maya is officially a bilingual lodge. Regular meetings are held in English, but candidates choose whether to receive the degrees in English or Spanish. Ritual "teams" proficient in each language step in when called upon, so not every officer needs to be word-perfect in both.

At Panamericana No 513, the approach is more straightforward, at least linguistically.

Like Maya, Panamericana grew out of a club of Spanish-speaking Masons. That group formed in Granada Hills in 2000. Using the Spanish ritual

translated at Maya, the group began training a new cohort in a version of the craft that hews more closely to what's practiced in most of Latin America. "We felt there was a void in some ways in California Masonry—a cultural void," says Torres.

Panamericana's founders envisioned an all-enveloping Latino Masonic experience. Not only would the ritual be performed in Spanish, but so would all meetings. The lodge would also embrace more of the esotericism found in Latin American lodge rooms. "The idea was, let's create a place where we can have an above-and-beyond experience specifically for members who share this background," Torres says.

These days, Panamericana No 513 is also a "traditional observance" lodge. Members wear a suit and tie to meetings, place extra emphasis on their ritual performance, and host frequent lectures and symposia. Initiates are expected to produce research papers demonstrating a deep understanding of Masonic philosophy. "It's pretty intense," Torres acknowledges with a laugh. "But it's a labor of love, man. We have a lot of pride in this lodge, and it's aligned with our pride as Latinos."

Often, members of the two Spanish-speaking lodges enter with a long history in Freemasonry. Oscar Gomora, for instance, is one of several members of Panamericana No 513 who originally joined an "irregular" Spanish-speaking lodge (those not recognized by the Grand Lodge of California). Only later did he discover that the Grand Lodge of California

"It's very spirited, very loud, very fun... That's what I fell in love with, that rich spirit."

Charter members of Maya No 793 in 1959.



JOSE VELA RONDON
Panamericana No 513
Nicolás de Piérola No 20 (Peru)

What are the biggest differences between lodges here and in Peru?

I've been able to visit lodges all over Latin America—Chile, Brazil, Mexico. They work very differently from here. All of them do the work very solemnly. When we're inside the temple, we sit up straight, legs together, hands on legs. You don't speak when you're in lodge. And here, the ritual is done from memory. That's incredible. In South America and

Mexico, too, you read it. Here, you have to have a very good memory to be a Mason.

So you need permission to speak in lodge there?

In South America, we can't talk once the meeting is open. Being silent, we learn how to have our thoughts together so that when we do get an opportunity to speak, we have something meaningful to share. After the meeting, if a brother wishes to speak, according to

their rank, they request permission from their warden.

Do you have a special appreciation for the international connections that Masonry offers?

When you visit a lodge in another country, you really feel the fraternity. I once went to a [table lodge] in Brazil with 300 Freemasons. When I came to the United States, I felt that these were brothers I'd known for years. It was the same feeling. ✨





Top: Members of Panamericana No 513 celebrate during a lodge Cinco de Mayo party in Pasadena. Above: Past Master Sergio Soto waves el tricolor.

included Spanish-speaking lodges. Now, he says, he appreciates the organization and support that the larger fraternity offers.

Past master Sergio Soto also joined Panamericana from an irregular lodge, where he says most members were unaware of matters of “regularity.” In any case, he says, there’s clearly an appetite for Masonry among Latinos in California—and one that should be better catered to. “I think it’s about time that California Masonry takes a look at the Latino community,” he says. “Having lodges that are visible in Latino communities will help us get new members and be a way for people to come into the Grand Lodge of California.”

THE NEXT EVOLUTION

Improving its visibility in the community is Panamericana’s biggest goal, members say. When the lodge was first chartered, it was with the intention that it would serve as a temporary home for recent immigrants looking to join the fraternity, before they settled in elsewhere. There was talk of offering English as a second language courses. Those never quite materialized. But increasingly, the lodge is becoming a resource for recent arrivals.

Between scholarships for local students, a yearly backpack and school-supply drive, and book giveaways, the lodge has made itself known as a place

where immigrant families can turn for help. More and more, members say they’re approached by people seeking asylum or in need of other forms of assistance, many of whom come with connections to Masonry back home. While there’s no formal assistance program in place, the lodge has become adept at connecting those in need with much-needed information and services.

Torres says that this work is helping the lodge become a “beacon” in the community. “We’re like this local incubator where people can come in and talk

to someone who can point them in the right direction,” he says. “It’s all very word-of-mouth, very community-focused.”

That’s the next step in the evolution of California’s Spanish-language lodges, members say. More than 50 years after opening their doors, Castellanos is direct in his view of where Maya’s and Panamericana’s future potential lies. “In my opinion, a hub for immigrant brothers to come in and find help is exactly what they should be. We’re a place they can call home.”



SEE MORE ONLINE

Check out a special web extra! Go behind the scenes with a video profile of Panamericana No 513 at

californiafreemason.org/panamericana513



MASONIC ASSISTANCE

Here for You, at Every Stage of Life

THE MASONIC CENTER FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES PROVIDES EMOTIONAL SUPPORT FOR ALL AGES. BY LAURA BENYS

FIRST IT WAS THE WEIGHT of isolation. Then it was the stress of reentry. All along, there has been the strain of living with fear and loss, inside a pressure cooker of change. And the effects are catching up with everyone.

“The pandemic has impacted all of us differently, but no one’s been spared,” says marriage and family therapist Kimberly Rich. “We all need emotional support right now.”

When Rich says “we all,” she really does mean everyone. As executive director of the **Masonic Center for Youth and Families**, she’s seen people at every stage of life struggle with the challenges of life in the pandemic. At MCYAF, Rich and her team work with children as young as 4 and

seniors in their 90s, as well as everything in between: adults, families, and teenagers.

That may come as a surprise to some Masons. A common misconception is that the organization focuses exclusively on young people.

It’s true that MCYAF does specialize in supporting kids, teens, and young adults with psychological and behavioral challenges. And the center employs specially trained clinicians skilled at working with schoolkids to overcome academic difficulties. But it also offers a full range of services for adults, too. For instance, MCYAF provides individual and couples therapy, along with family therapy, for people of all ages. That includes seniors. As of this year, each campus of



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the Masonic Homes of California has a full-time mental health clinician on staff.

That means that MCYAF is available to help just about anyone, anytime, with challenges like anxiety, stress, burnout, and depression. MYCAF helps couples keep their relationships healthy. They help families cope with change. And they help kids and teens manage the extraordinary challenges of growing up in the 2020s. These services are completely confidential and available virtually as well as in person. No one is turned away based on their ability to pay, and anyone with a Masonic affiliation receives a discount. (Additionally, MCYAF is now Medicare certified.)

"We're here to go through the heaviness of life with you," says Jodi Mikel, the center's program manager.

A BENEFIT HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

In MCYAF, California Masons have an extraordinary resource at their disposal—and one that Mikel wants to see put to even greater use.

Elsewhere, counseling and mental health services can be hard to come by or prohibitively expensive. Especially since the pandemic began, several community-run mental health programs are filled beyond capacity, and private-practice therapists have in many cases stopped accepting insurance. The cost of a single session can be shockingly expensive. Then again, many people

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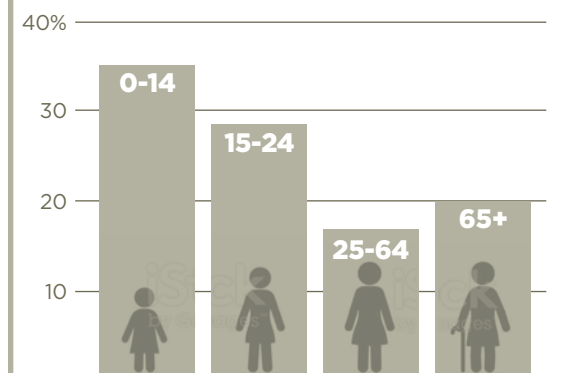
MCYAF offers senior support services to help navigate illness, grief, loneliness, and end-of-life transitions.

INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY THERAPY

Building trusting relationships allowing clients to explore areas of concern in a safe and accepting environment.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

MCYAF services by clients' age.



never get that far. "At most places," Rich says, "the wait lists are outrageous."

That's not the case at MCYAF.

"We never turn a Mason or their family member away," Rich says. "No matter how full we are, we will find a way. We will be here for you."

A person or family doesn't need to be in the midst of a full-blown crisis to call, either. Mikel stresses that it's OK to reach out even for problems you might be tempted to dismiss as too minor for the professionals. "I think a common misconception is that people need to stay in therapy for years," she says. "Short-term support allows people to check in as needed to navigate a specific challenge."

Rich agrees. "Problems tend to get smaller after therapy," she says. "Sometimes you need another person, a professional, to help you sort it out. Some of us are still dealing with feelings of loneliness and isolation from the pandemic. Other folks are anxious or depressed. We're here for all needs, great and small. We know how to help."

Over the past two years, more and more Masons and their loved ones have tapped into that help. Time and again, Rich, Mikel, and the rest of the MCYAF team hear a common refrain: "I wish I knew about you sooner."

Now, they're on a mission to change that.

"It's really important that every Mason knows they have this invaluable resource waiting for them," Rich says. "Life has a lot of ups and downs. You never know what's going to happen around the bend. You may not need us now, but in case you need us in the future, you should know we're here." ❖

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Patrick Muldoon

11-YEAR MASON

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California Freemason: As an operations controller for the Golden Gate Bridge District, has Masonry shaped your professional life?

Patrick Muldoon: Masonry has definitely shaped my approach to servant-leadership. I really enjoy encouraging the personal growth of the people I work with. That's something I got from Masonry. I was coached and mentored by some fantastic men in my lodges. I remember a past master telling me at my third-degree ceremony that I'd get back what I give out. He was absolutely right.

CFM: As a member of the Cornerstone Society, you've set aside a gift for the California Masonic Foundation. What inspired you to do that?

PM: Volunteering has been part of my life as far back as I can remember. It's an important value that I've tried to teach my two kids. They give 10 percent of their own money to charity or to projects they connect with. I'm really proud they get a sense of joy from giving back. When it comes to Masonry, giving to the Cornerstone Society allows me to ensure that our fraternity and its services will remain long after I'm gone.

CFM: You're also a captain for Masons4Mitts. What makes that program special to you?

PM: My wife and I both coach youth sports, so we get to see how kids develop, build friendships, and learn life skills through sports. All kids should be able to join a team and learn to support themselves and one another. Masons4Mitts helps kids get that positive, life-changing experience—especially kids who may not otherwise have that opportunity to participate. And then Masons Night at the Ballpark is a big yearly highlight for me because I can bring my family to a game, and they can see just how much the fraternity supports our community. ♦ —JUSTIN JAPITANA

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SAN FRANCISCO

Roaring Back!

JOIN US as the Masons of California roar back to life at the **173RD ANNUAL COMMUNICATION**. It's our annual opportunity to come together for a weekend-long celebration of Freemasonry, to vote on important legislation, and to help guide the future of the fraternity. Get in on the swing of things at the **ROARING 20S-THEMED GALA**, invite your plus-one to the First Lady's **PARTNERS AND FAMILY LUNCH**, sit in on the yearly **BUSINESS SESSIONS**, and celebrate as a **NEW GRAND MASTER** is installed.

GRAND LODGE BUSINESS SESSIONS

at the California Masonic
Memorial Temple
Friday, Oct. 21-Sunday, Oct. 23

PARTNERS AND FAMILY LUNCH

at the Masonic Center
for Youth and Families
Saturday, October 22

GRAND MASTER'S BANQUET

at the Fairmont Hotel's
Venetian Room
Saturday, October 22



**REGISTER AT
FREEMASON.ORG/ANNCOMM22**