DIA DE LOS MUERTOS: WHEN MEMORIES OF THE DEAD COME ALIVE

Voices in Our Communities

HONORING THE DEARLY DEPARTED
BY EMILY ESPARZA

Mexico and much of Latin America is covered with marigolds to guide their dead home during the first two days of November. Dia de los Muertos is a way for families to honor and remember those who have gone before. An amalgamation of pre-Hispanic and Catholic traditions, this celebration was inducted by UNESCO in 2008.

The holiday is a reminder that life is eternal, and the presence of loved ones is everlasting. An altar and ofrendas (offerings) are essential. Families decorate altars with photos of their deceased and put out their favorite foods and drinks. Adorned with sugar skulls, flores de cempasúchil and papel picado, altars are a vibrant and joyful celebration of life.

“People look at death as something negative,” said Assistant Professor Angelica Gonzalez. Southwestern student Ariana Tapia said Dia de los Muertos is the exact opposite.

“Death is real and even though our loved ones are no longer here, we can reconnect and remember them with happiness,” she said.

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SKELETONS AT THE FEAST—altars and displays of colorful Dia de los Muertos art blossomed in Old Town and cemeteries across the region.

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