

by Robert Halpern



Chicano author Rudolfo A. Anaya

Chicano author Anaya documents evolving Latino culture in his work

Rudolfo Anaya has become the male alter ego of Ultima, the central character in his most powerful novel, Bless me, Ultima.

She's little Antonio's grandmother, the *curandera* for the people of northern New Mexican villages where Antonio grew up, on the mysterious, magical *llano*.

Like Antonio, Anaya was raised on the llano.

Ultima is one of the last living links to *Azlan* - the unknown homeland for Latinos in the North and South Americas and Mexico - dispensing wisdom, warnings and guidance, serving as a continuum of a history and culture of a people.

During a roundtable discussion with the noted Chicano author at the Alpine Community Center Saturday afternoon, Anaya transformed into a sage, an elder, a wise one, himself now a continuum of a culture, challenging the small group of participants with his views of the local, regional and global villages, of politics, the state of life, education and evolving culture of American Latinos.

Roundtable participants could have been sitting in the shade made by a *lechuguilla*-stalk porch of an old adobe chanti, stuck out in Far West Texas nowhere, a scene, if you will, out of Bless me, Ultima, or one

of the short stories, called *cuentos*, in his book, The Silence of the Llano.

Life and death, represented by the seasons and the elements are an integral part of Antonio's and Anaya's life and culture, and right on cue, a storm grew outside south Alpine that cloudy, clammy Saturday afternoon, with lightning, light rain and howling winds, a foreboding of the coming of *la llorana* that night.

Are we Chicanos, Latinos, Hispanics, Mexicans, Mexican-Americans, Spanish-Americans, Mestizos? a roundtable participant asked:

Labels, labels, labels, Anaya
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