



RAICES DE MEXICO

Ballet Folklorico 804 Bell Street East Palo Alto, Ca. 94303
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Thursday, December 2, 1993

PRESS RELEASE
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Between a Rock and No Place

The fate of a thirteen-year-old Mexican regional dance troupe in East Palo Alto is currently "blowing in the wind." The City of East Palo Alto has allowed Raices de Mexico (an incorporated non-profit, cultural and educational organization) to use the dance studio since 1988 at the site of the old Ravenswood High School. This studio has been quite suitable for our needs as a semi-professional dance troupe. There are no other facilities in East Palo Alto that are comparable or that can provide (minimally) the necessary space for a consistent company of 20-25 adults and 10-15 children who rehearse four times a week. Without use of the Ravenswood facility Raices de Mexico would have to rent a studio space somewhere else, out of East Palo Alto. We would hate to have to leave this community because we understand the great need that exists here. Also, at this time we do not have the kind of budget that could absorb a steep rental expense, this could bankrupt our organization.

Those Ravenswood facilities are expected to be razed in late 1994 to make way for a shopping center complex known as Gateway 101. While the City Council initially was going to delay demolition of the gymnasium, and dance studio in order to allow us maximum use of these facilities, this has been reversed due to unexpected conditions. Both gym and studio roofs leak during heavy rainfall and this has created a liability problem. Also, the City sees little point in investing on maintenance repairs for buildings doomed to be torn down. However, speaking at a City Council meeting Monday November 15, 1993, Mayor Sharifa Wilson called for "creative solutions to this problem." It is in that spirit that this plea for help goes out. This is a call to conscientious arts supporters and volunteer roofers in the area who would help us patch the roof with tar. We could provide the labor if someone would provide for the materials.

Why help us maintain buildings that are doomed for destruction? Because we feel that these facilities are valuable to the groups that use them. In the near future we would like to be able to make the case to the City of East Palo Alto that it is in all our collective best interest to renegotiate with Home Depot for the retention of these buildings as an annex of a future EPA cultural center. It is far more inexpensive to keep and maintain those grand facilities than to tear them down and build similar structures elsewhere. Moreover, by having a City facility at this shopping center, the tenant businesses would always be assured of residual clients and commerce being close to the stores.

Please help us to stay in East Palo Alto and to continue our creative work. Any suggestions or help, please call Javier B. Pacheco (415-323-8302) or Matias Varela (415-322-1501). Thanks for supporting the performing arts!