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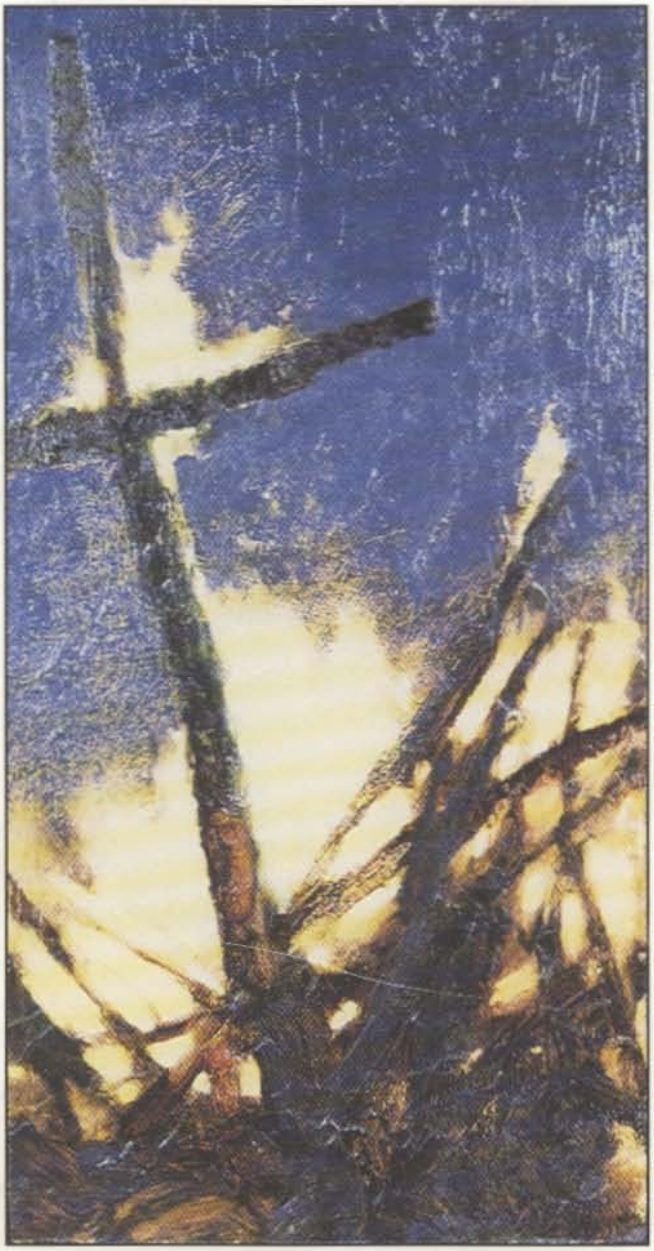

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Cross
by Gary Logan

FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE
The Confederate Flag Controversy

CALLALOO

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BETWEEN DIXIE AND AZTLÁN

by Daniel Chacon

> *"Texas? Everybody's got chain saws and gun racks and pickups and confederate flags. Aren't you scared?"*
> —Sandra Cisneros, *Woman Hollering Creek*

I told my friend from Honduras that I would be moving from rural Minnesota to take a position at the University of Texas. She teaches Spanish at a high school in Ohio, and she said in her thick Honduran accent, "Texas? It's so humid over there. And racist."

"Not only that," I said, "but they talk funny."

I knew that she was talking about a part of Texas I had never known, or had never seen. She was talking about the South.

"No, no," I told her, "I'll be in El Paso. That's Aztlán."[1]

She has only been in this country for a little over two years, both of them in Ohio in grad school, but she had heard things about the South and about Texas and the mention of them conjured images of racism. She's clearly a Latina, long black hair, black eyes, and a thick accent. We talked about her coming to visit me in El Paso, and she wondered if people would be hostile to her. She didn't realize that El Paso is the least Texas city in Texas, culturally closer to New Mexico or even Mexico than to the images she holds of Texas and the South. Rarely does one see in El Paso a Dixie flag decal stuck to the back window of a Ford pickup. In fact, many of the Ford pickups in El Paso have Chihuahua license plates, the Mexican state across the line, and one would be more likely to see Mexican flags stuck to the back window than they would to see Dixie flags.

About 80% of the population of this city of over 600,000 is Mexican or Xican@[2] or Latino or however you label us, and when you add El Paso's twin city, Ciudad Juarez, with a population of 1.6 million, you're talking about a lot of Mexicans, a lot of Spanish language, a metropolitan culture that is different not only from the rest of Texas—and thus the South—but more unique and tolerant than places like rural Minnesota and Ohio. The major daily English-language newspaper here has Spanish advertisements as a norm, and the daily entertainment section is called *Vamos*, "let's go," but with no translation. There are more Spanish language radio stations in the city than there are stations in English. Walk around the university where I teach, and almost all the conversations you hear are in Spanish. There are more taco places per capita, and damned good ones, than there are in any U.S. city.[3] This is not what one pictures when