



**Your on the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

**America's Cities
Santa Fe: Governor's Plaza**

Santa Fe: Governor's Plaza Report One

February 27, 2005

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter, reporting from Santa Fe, New Mexico, the land of enchantment and the "city different."¹

Santa Fe is indeed different. First, even though a small city, revenue from its arts industry is second only to New York City. Some streets have art galleries end-to-end. Second, it is the state capitol for New Mexico. Third, its people are a mix of South Americans, Central Americans, African Americans, India Indians, Native Americans, Mestizos, Asians, as well as white-skinned Gringos---and they all get along with one another.

Old Town Santa Fe

The most popular Santa Fe attraction is its downtown area. I like it for three reasons. It has no neon lights. It has only adobe buildings, with no skyscrapers. French food is banned, unless escargot is served with green chilies.

Critics of the architecture complain downtown Santa Fe resembles a scaled-down Disneyworld. Perhaps so, but I don't care if Santa Fe is contrived. Its ambience provides relief from the ruins of urban landscapes prevalent in other cities. Take a look at Figure 1 and judge for yourself. This area of Santa Fe is called Governor's Plaza

The middle photo in the picture is a shot of the Governor's Palace, the oldest public building in America and the residence and offices of Mexico-appointed governors in the old days. Built in 1610, it now houses a museum, with arts and crafts vendors selling their wares on its sidewalk. This photo shows tourists looking over pottery, paintings, silver bracelets, and turquoise necklaces made by Indians; eh, Native Americans; eh, North American Natives; eh, North American Indians.

In this report, we will discover the answers to three questions: (1) Do the first human inhabitants of North America care if they are called Indians? (2) Do the first human inhabitants of North America care if the Washington Redskins are called the Washington Redskins? (3) Do the local cantinas, otherwise specializing in Tequila, offer Hennessy XO without the drinker signing a second mortgage?

In hopes you will not hit Delete when you receive my second report, I will sign-off for now, and embark onto the Santa Fe streets to answer these questions.

Your on the Street Reporter

¹ Photo on cover courtesy of Google. Key-in Santa Fe into Google's search window.

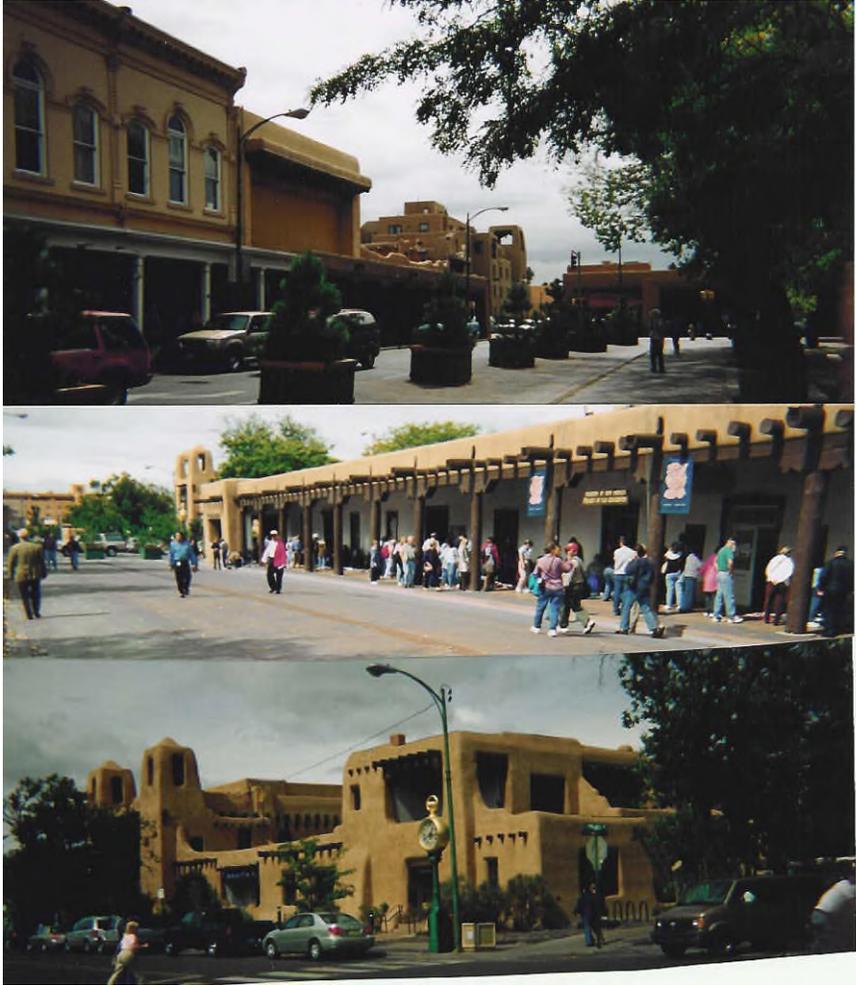


Figure1. Scenes from downtown Santa Fe.

Santa Fe, New Mexico Report Two

February 28, 2005

Hello from downtown Santa Fe, location of the historic Governor's Palace, and the artisans on the sidewalk in front of the Palace (as seen in the Figure 2). These folks were the respondents to my statistically-significant Gallup like poll, in that they were selected from a carefully crafted random survey of any street vendor who would talk to me.



Figure 2. At the Governor's Palace.

After conversations about the weather and their work, I asked these craftspeople, in one fashion or another, "Have you a preference as to what you call your art and your culture: Indian, Native American, or some other name?"

Based on recent newspaper coverage of several special interest groups who make their living by feeding on this issue, I would have assumed all the responses would have been anything but "Indian." But the responses did not come out that way. With one exception to my eight-person survey (I said it was statistically significant), the responses were something on the order of, *It really isn't important*. The one exception was from a bracelet maker who said, "The best name for us is Native Americans."

Two of the eight responses were to this effect, "We prefer to be called 'Navajo.'" From past experience, I have found many Native Americans identify more with their tribe than with their race. The others did not think it a big issue. I gathered the word *Indian* was offensive or harmless to most of these folks based on the context in which it was used.

Sidebar: Are you a Jew or Jewish?

This idea of the context in which "Indian" is used is the same in relation to the use of the word "Jew." Many people are reluctant to use this noun; as in, "He's a Jew." Instead, we say, "He's Jewish." Jewish what? The word "Jewish" is an adjective. It needs a noun or pronoun to follow it; as in, "He's a Jewish person." Because of the history of discrimination against the Jews, the phrase, "He's a Jew," may be taken as a fact or taken as a derogatory comment.

My friend Harvey, who is a Jew, as well as a Jewish person, tells me the interpretation of the word *Jew* is a matter of how it is uttered. I agree with Harvey. Many words are interpreted by how they are spoken, how they come out of our mouths. "She's a Baptist." "He's an Arab." "They're Evangelicals," are facts or slurs---depending on the intonation of the sentences.

I often use the word *Indian*, mostly from habit. I mean nothing but to identify a group of people. Still, the word is wildly inaccurate. But so is *Native American*. Like all of us, they too migrated from other continents. They just got here first.

One woman, a maker of silver earrings said, “It is only an issue with those who have moved away from their Indian culture and are looking for a way to reconnect back to it.” Another responded, “They’re just looking for the spotlight.”

Therefore, to the first question: Do the original human inhabitants of North America really care one way or the other what they are called? Answer: Some do, most don’t.

To the second question: Do the original human inhabitants of North America care if the Washington Redskins are called the Washington Redskins? The answers were pretty much the same: *It really isn’t important*. Generally, my respondents thought the issue was silly, an issue for the past. The one exception was the woman who preferred to be called Native American. She said the name, *Redskins*, was demeaning. Another craftsman was reluctant to answer this question, so I begged off.

As with the word, *Indian*, I came away thinking the view of the word *Redskins* was based mostly on the context in which it was used.

Therefore, to the second question: Do the original human inhabitants of North America care if the Washington Redskins are called the Washington Redskins? Answer: Some do, most don’t.

To the question: Do the local cantinas, otherwise specializing in Tequila, offer Hennessy XO without the drinker signing a second mortgage?

This leads me into the third and final report on Santa Fe, forthcoming shortly.

Your on the Street Reporter

Santa Fe, New Mexico Report Three

March 1, 2005

Hello from Santa Fe and several cantinas. By the way, for my readers who might not like my writing about brandy, please keep in mind the nature of my economic research: Prices. Cost curves. Supply and demand. Think of it this way: Milton Friedman on a bar stool.

Also, I received emails complaining my reports on Santa Fe have not covered much about Santa Fe. Good point. I promise more reports on this city. It is one of my favorite places to visit.

Having finished with our studies of culturally stigmatized names, we can now move to the most serious of the three questions posed in the first report: Do the local cantinas offer Hennessy XO at a reasonable price?

I am staying in a lodge called The Inn of the Anasazi. A fine hotel, I've no complaints. However, "Anasazi" is a curious name for a hotel, because the Anasazi people ceased to exist several centuries ago. They died (or melded into other tribes) because the mismanaged themselves out of existence. They over-farmed their land, cut down too many trees, and eventually depleted their soil. Eventually, they abandoned their homes or died from freezing, starvation, and intertribal warfare. ... *Welcome to the Inn of the Anasazi Hotel. We are proud to offer you wonderful amenities associated with our famous name. In keeping with this heritage, we trust you have brought your own water.*

Before lawsuits come my way, the hotel is first-rate and offers free hot water showers. It also houses a wonderful bar:

On my last day in this city, I paid a visit to the hotel bar to conduct my on-going survey of Hennessy XO. To my surprise, I discovered the Inn of the Anasazi bar does not sell this brandy. An up-scale bar, without Hennessy XO. Hard to imagine.

The bartender, a fine chap named George Stump, defended the hotel's approach, "We have attractive alternatives, Mr. Black." He went to his shelves of booze, pulled-off several bottles, retrieved as many glasses, and brought them to your reporter. Pouring just a bit of each into these glasses, the investigation proceeded.

I sampled some of George's finest spirits. I admit his inventory was impressive, but some of the offerings were ridiculous. For example, a sip of modestly priced brandy was far better than one almost five times as expensive. Just like the sham with some of the expensive wines. But this is not the fault of the hotel or George. Like us, they also have to buy the stuff.

After viewing one bottle that was corked in 1946, I told George, "Its age is lost on me. So is the price. Sorry." (The price was \$70 for a shot.)

After a few samples, my taste buds were also lost. Not to mention, my budget. Even worse, my investigation of Hennessy XO prices in Santa Fe was incomplete. In the spirit of the investigation, I sought out another restaurant. Across the street from the Anasazi Hotel is the Bull Ring, one the best steak eateries in Santa Fe.

Here I had dinner, then ordered the obligatory Hennessy XO. The bottom line: The Bull Ring first charged me \$25.00 (about average). However, after I informed them I was conducting a survey of restaurants' charges for this beverage, and that the upper-end prices were in the upper \$20's, the bartender announced the price was \$28.00. As we say today, go figure.

That's it from Santa Fe, at least for a while.