



THE NEW TIJUANA

'THE NEW TIJUANA' PROFILES ECONOMIC, POLITICAL

AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION OF MEXICAN BORDER CITY

Tijuana, Mexico, is now the West Coast's second largest city after Los Angeles and, with 35 million tourists each year, the world's most-visited city. As it celebrates its 100th anniversary, Tijuana is rapidly emerging as the political, economic, and social leader for the rest of Mexico to follow.

The New Tijuana is a KPBS-produced profile of this boom-town, struggling between its heritage as a Third World city with a sordid past, and its promise as a modern center for international finance and high technology. Luis Valdez, founder and artistic director of El Teatro Campesino, narrates.

Divided into four segments that explore the past, the future, and some of the problems and challenges facing the city today, the documentary opens with "The Legacy of the Past." Fascinating archival photos and film footage of Hollywood stars like Rita Hayworth and William Powell trace Tijuana's history and reputation as both a seedy border town and an exciting city serving Americans in search of fast times.

Since the 1960s, however, the city has begun a transformation that includes the development of the Zona del Rio (River Zone) with its shimmering modern buildings housing financial institutions, designer shops, and high-tech discos. The documentary reveals that this progress began with a devastating (and some say suspicious) flood that wiped out the impoverished communities along the Tijuana River that stood in the way of the development.

"The Promise of the Future" examines the phenomenon of the maquiladores which are transforming Tijuana into the new Hong Kong. These assembly plants import raw materials into Mexico duty-free and export finished goods across the border to the U.S., where custom duties are charged only on the value added to the product in Mexico. The maquiladores, a successful component of the Mexican government's plan to attract foreign investment, serve mainly American and a rapidly growing number of Japanese companies.

The maquiladores employ more than 55,000 Tijuans, many of whom live in communities like "El Florido." Cameras visit this city-within-a-city, which has sprung up overnight without and city services. Residents speak out to demand government improvements and services such as electricity, water, and security.

"The Price of Independence" looks at another barometer of change in Tijuana: the emergence of a fiercely independent press. Focusing on Tijuana's most influential and widely-read segment maps the history and dangers of publicly criticizing the power structure. A report about the still-unsolved 1988 assassination of popular Zeta columnist Hector "El Gato" Felix Miranda highlights the hazards of serious journalism in Mexico.

The final segment, "The Challenge of a Generation," chronicles last year's historic elections in the state of Baja California that produced the first opposition victory in the history of the



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Mexican republic. Previously, all elected officials in the country, from the president down to the mayor of the smallest town, were hand-picked by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). In 1989, under the watchful eyes of the international media, the governorship of Baja California was won by National Action Party (PAN) candidate Ernesto Ruffo, who ran on a platform of reform and responsive government. His win reflected Tijuana's participation in the dramatic struggle for democracy that is sweeping the globe.

In his inaugural address, Ruffo develops a theme that applies not only to his administration but also to the threshold on which the city of Tijuana now stands: "We don't ignore the complexities or the difficulties of this moment of transition in which the past hasn't really died and the future hasn't really been born. To cross this difficult phase is the challenge of our generation."

"The New Tijuana" is a production of KPBS Television, made possible by a grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Paul Espinosa is the producer. Frank Christopher directs. Writers are Paul Espinosa and Frank Christopher. Videography is by Marty Zimmerman.