

[Search History](#) [Saved Articles](#)

[Show Help](#)

[New Search](#)

Previous **Article 1 of 1** Next

Save this Article 

A cute symbol of changing times - His name is Gerardo, and he's the face of the new Texas

Dallas Morning News, The (TX) - Friday, January 5, 2007

Author: JACQUELYNN FLOYD

We put a lot of thought around here into naming a "Texan of the Year," The Dallas Morning News' annual rite of choosing a newsworthy individual who represents a significant issue or event.

Because it was only last weekend that we announced our Texan for 2006 - a Lubbock man who lost two soldier sons in two years - it's perhaps a little premature to make any predictions for '07.

But I'm confident there won't be a more eligible candidate in the coming 51 weeks than Gerardo Vasquez Jr.

Gerardo personifies the dramatic changes that have swept the state over the last few decades. He's at the epicenter of a loud and contentious debate over the evolution of American policy and politics.

Gerardo Vasquez Jr. is the face of the new Texas.

All this is lost on Gerardo himself, who is only six minutes younger than the new year. He was the first child born in Dallas County in 2007, arriving Monday morning at 12:06, a day or so ahead of schedule.

A sweet, 8-pound peanut of a baby, Gerardo was snoozing peacefully when we met this week as he and his mother, Alma Vasquez, were getting ready to go home from the hospital.

Looking at the hope, promise and potential of her new son, Ms. Vasquez expressed the universal desires of new parents everywhere.

"I want him to be a good kid," said Ms. Vasquez, 30, speaking through a translator. "I want him to have a good education and a good life."

It is not Gerardo's concern right now that a lot of people who saw a little news blip in Tuesday's paper about his birth probably wondered whether (or perhaps cynically assumed) he is the child of illegal immigrants.

He's not: Ms. Vasquez, who is from Mexico, is a naturalized American citizen.

They might have assumed reflexively that he was born at Parkland Memorial Hospital's crowded maternity ward, where most of the county's indigent births take place.

He wasn't. He was born at Mesquite Community Hospital, a small, pleasant, for-profit hospital. His doctor was not a harried, sleep-deprived resident but veteran obstetrician Clayton Shaw, who doubles as chief of staff.

Like increasing numbers of blue-collar Latino families, Gerardo's parents live and work in the suburbs. His dad, a construction worker, and his mom, a machine operator at a sheet-metal factory, live in Garland.

 **0 Saved Articles**
 **this article**

[Email](#)

[Print](#)

☐ Citations only

Print Articles

Bibliography (export)

Quick Links

[Find articles by JACQUELYNN FLOYD](#)

[Find more articles from page 1B](#)

[Find more from section "METRO"](#)

[Find all articles from January 5, 2007](#)

"Mucho trabajo," Ms. Vasquez said. That much I understood without translation.

Gerardo has three siblings, a 3-year-old brother and sisters ages 8 and 9. The 8-year-old, who has Down syndrome, is particularly precious to her mother, who carries her picture everywhere: "She is my special one. She's God's miracle."

Ms. Vasquez's children are members of a huge demographic wave in American culture. The nation's immigrant Latino population has grown by 17 million in the last decade, reports the Pew Hispanic Center. And 12 million more are, like Gerardo, children of those immigrants.

That is a lot of new people, and their presence is having a profound political impact. Last year saw the acceleration of a growing protest against a de facto "don't-ask-don't-tell" policy regarding residency status.

Farmers Branch, of course, took the extreme step of adopting anti-illegal immigrant ordinances of its own.

And the year saw the largest public gathering in Dallas history - an overwhelmingly Latino crowd that rallied to signify opposition to proposed changes in immigration policy. A lot was said, but the sheer numbers spoke more loudly than anything else.

A majority of Hispanics surveyed by the Pew Center said the national policy debate has created resentment and discrimination that targets legal residents as well as illegal immigrants

If Gerardo is lucky, he'll learn English early. Interestingly, the Pew Center reports, surveys show that Hispanics, regardless of their income levels or party affiliation, believe by a large margin that immigrants need to learn English to participate in American society.

If Gerardo is really lucky, these issues will be resolved by the time he grows up: Our society will have adjusted to the seismic shifts in its demography, and the political brawl over immigration will be done with.

For now, at least, he doesn't have to worry. After all, he's just a baby.

E-mail jfloyd@dallasnews.com

Caption: PHOTO(S): (1-2. CHERYL DIAZ MEYER/Staff Photographer) 1. Gerardo Vasquez Jr., Dallas County's first baby of 2007, personifies the shift in demographics across Texas. 2. Alma Vasquez and daughters Lupita (left), 8, and Odalys, 9, enjoy some quality time with the newest member of their family, Gerardo Vasquez Jr.

Edition: WEST

Section: METRO

Page: 1B

Column: JACQUIELYN FLOYD

Record Number: 1180607812

Copyright 2007 The Dallas Morning News

To bookmark this article, right-click on the link below, and copy the link location:

[A cute symbol of changing times - His name is Gerardo, and he's the face of the new Texas](#)

[New Search](#)

Previous **Article 1 of 1** Next