

seasonal: under-recognized autumn holidays



DIWALI

Q: EVER WONDERED WHY HOUSES ARE DECORATED WITH LIGHTS EARLY IN NOVEMBER, BEFORE THE HOLIDAYS?
A: IT IS A DIWALI TRADITION



DIWALI COMES FROM THE SANSKRIT WORD DEEPAVALI, WHICH MEANS THE FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS. IT IS AN AUSPICIOUS FIVE- DAY FESTIVAL CELEBRATED BY HINDUS, SIKHS, AND JAINS. EACH HAS THEIR OWN TRADITIONS, BUT THE MOST COMMON ONES ARE LIGHTING OIL LAMPS, VISITING FAMILY, WATCHING FIREWORKS, DRESSING UP IN TRADITIONAL CLOTHES, AND WORSHIPPING THE GODDESS LAKSHMI- KNOWN FOR GOOD FORTUNE. THIS MONTH OF "KARTHIK" IN THE HINDU CALENDER (AN OVERLAP OF OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER) MARKS THE END OF A HARVEST SEASON, SO THE FOLLOWERS OF THE RELIGION OFFER THEIR HARVEST TO THE GODDESS LAKSHMI FOR PROSPERITY.

DASAHAIN

Q: WHY IS THE GODDESS DURGA KNOWN AS THE "GREAT MOTHER OF THE UNIVERSE"?
A: SHE IS A SUPREME POWER CREATED WITH A COMBINATION OF THE POWERS OF ALL THE OTHER GODS



DASHAIN IS THE LONGEST HOLIDAY CELEBRATED MOSTLY BY NEPALIS. EACH DAY IS DEDICATED TO A PARTICULAR TRADITION SUCH AS SLAUGHTERING LIVESTOCK, PLANTING BARLEY SEEDS, ETC. THIS HOLIDAY CELEBRATES THE VICTORY OF A GODDESS NAMED DURGA AGAINST AN EVIL DEMON. A BIG TRIUMPH OF NEW BEGINNINGS IN ANCIENT HINDU CULTURE. CERTAIN ACTIVITIES SUCH AS PLAYING CARDS WITH FAMILY, FLYING KITES AND DECORATING YOUR HOUSE ARE A MUST. BUT THE BIGGEST EVENT OCCURS AT THE END OF THE 15 DAYS. OLDER MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY APPLY TIKA- A MIX OF RICE, VERMILLION AND YOGURT- ON THE FOREHEADS OF THOSE YOUNGER THAN THEM, AND THEY GIVE THEM MONEY AND BLESSINGS FOR A GOOD FUTURE.

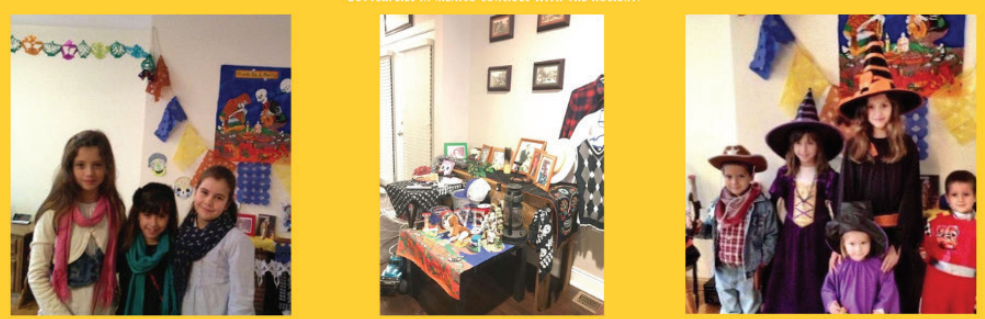


SENIOR NAILI SANCHEZ CELEBRATING THE HOLIDAY THROUGHOUT HER CHILDHOOD!



DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS

Q: WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BUTTERFLIES DURING DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS?
A: THEY ARE BELIEVED TO HOLD THE SPIRITS OF THOSE WHO HAVE PASSED AWAY. THIS BELIEF BEGAN WHEN PEOPLE REALIZED THAT THE FIRST ARRIVAL OF THE BUTTERFLIES IN MEXICO COINCIDES WITH THE HOLIDAY.



DAY OF THE DEAD IS A TWO DAY HISPANIC HOLIDAY THAT IS BELIEVED TO REUNITE THE LIVING AND DEAD. FAMILIES VISIT GRAVES OF THEIR LOVED ONES TO CREATE OFRENDAS, (OFFERINGS) TO HONOR THEIR ANCESTORS. YOU CAN FIND THESE ALTARS DECORATED WITH PHOTOS OF THE DEPARTED, CANDLES, SUGAR SKULLS, BRIGHT YELLOW MARIGOLDS AND THE FAVORITE FOODS OF THE ONES BEING HONORED. THIS HOLIDAY IS CELEBRATED TO REACH THE SOULS OF THE DEAD WITH PRAYERS, SO THEY CAN SOMEHOW BE A PART OF THE CELEBRATION TOO. DURING THE MOST RECENT YEARS PEOPLE HAVE BEGUN DRESSING UP WITH SKELETON PAINTED FACES TO PARTICIPATE IN PARADES THAT ARE ALSO A BIG PART OF THE CELEBRATION.

