

# Mantel on the Table

**Sangre Latina**

**O**N DECEMBER 17, 1995, THE LATINO YOUTH THEATER GROUP SANGRE LATINA performed their play, "Mantel on the Table," at La Peña Cultural Center, in Berkeley, California. The play, written by the youth, was the culmination of a summer of research and improvisation done as part of the Children and the Environment Planning Project. The "Mantel Wimpey Show" serves as a backdrop for a satirical farce about the way young people are portrayed in relation to environmental problems in their community and the effects this portrayal has on their self-confidence and self-perception. Sangre Latina is one of many arts programs that enable young people to inhabit the realm of culture and media, using art to describe their relationship to their environment and as a venue for "public education." What follows is the script of the play.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

Walter (Rosendo) Rebuelo	Stage Manager
Rolando (Kane) Rebuelo	Camera Person
Father (Luis Rebuelo)	Make-up Lady
Mother (Dolores Rebuelo)	Audience Member 1
Mantel Wimpey	Audience Member 2
Chief Esther Escoba	Audience Member 3
Lorenzo Bacalao	Audience Member 4
Dr. Wasteoftime	Audience Member 5
Grandma Georgie	

*Curtain opens on the TV set for the "Mantel Wimpey Show." WALTER (Rosendo) is sitting on the floor chanting. The rest of the Rebuelo family enters: ROLANDO (Kane), FATHER, and MOTHER.*

**FATHER:** What are you doing?! Are you trying to be psychic again? Look! We finally made it on Mantel Wimpey. Try to act normal, O.K.? And please use your real name, Rosendo.

**WALTER:** You're distracting my concentration. You are creating a block and my name is not Rosendo, it's Walter.

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SANGRE LATINA is a theatrical company of 10 children under the direction of Luz De La Riva (2800 8th Avenue, Oakland, CA 94610), whose mission is to help young people, many of them former gang members, find better lives through the medium of the theater arts. They have written and performed several plays on stage in community theaters and on youth radio in Northern California.

**FATHER:** Listen to me, Walter, or whatever you want to call yourself: don't embarrass the family today! Don't try to read any palms or start telling people's future! They are going to send you to a mental institution! Don't try to be like Walter Picado.

**WALTER:** But I admire him. If I want to be like him, I'll be like him.

**FATHER:** Don't say anything about my personal life, or your mother's, or your brother's. He's a troublemaker. He's abnormal, that one! And you....

**WALTER:** I'm normal.

**FATHER:** You are not normal. Trust me.... Don't do that on TV! Millions of people will be watching us. If you do, I'll send you out. (*Gesturing a punch*)

**WALTER:** I'll call the spirits and bring back Grandma Georgie.

**FATHER:** Oh, no! Don't bring her back! You know what she'll do to the family.

**WALTER:** Don't tell me you're afraid of spirits.

**FATHER:** I'm not, just leave her alone. She's dead.

**WALTER:** Not for me. I'm her favorite. (*Starts chanting*) Grandma Georgie, come! Please Grandma, come.

**FATHER:** You're crazy! I can't argue with no psychic!

**WALTER:** Hold it.... I got John Lennon!

**FATHER:** Oh yeah, sure!

**WALTER:** I'm bringing him down. He's right beside you. (*Mumbles to himself*)

**FATHER:** If you keep this up, I'm going to block the 900 number for the Psychic Connection line! I've had it now.... What's that?

**WALTER:** He's talking to me of nature and toxic waste and pollution (*FATHER gets impatient*) ...and about those purple and orange bellbottoms you wore on your first date....

**FATHER:** (*interrupting quickly*) O.K., O.K., I'm a believer! Let me talk to him...quickly.

**WALTER:** Of course, you have to pay \$3.99 per minute. (*As FATHER aims at him*).... That's what they charge on the program, Dad! I'm just trying to be a professional like Grandma Georgie taught me.

**FATHER:** (*putting arm around WALTER*) You know, son...we might be able to work out a deal here. Think of it, your own negocio.

**WALTER:** Wait a minute, tata! Are you trying to use my talents for financial gain? Ah, ha! You see a chance to get that vibrating chair from the Shopping Network.... You know...with la Vanna esa, tu sabes, with the big....

**MOTHER:** Huevon! I knew it! You been cheating on me with la pinche Vanna, quién? (*FATHER tries to protest, but in vain.*) Hijo de la chingada!

**FATHER:** Dolores, mi vida.... I don't know no Vanna.

**WALTER:** Dad.... Dad.... I meant the one with the big earth.... (*FATHER slaps money into his hand to shut him up.*)

**MOTHER:** Oh, no, you're at it again! I told you to stop that nonsense! Now you're going to start talking about la Grandma Georgie. The next thing you know I won't be able to find my hair spray again because you feel guilty about holes in the sky and you'll be talking crazy again about how I "pollute" the little birdies, the flowers, and the

pinche bees! Don't you even think about bringing up any of that locura on the show. Keep your mouth closed.

*(During the end of her speech, MANTEL WIMPEY enters.)*

**MANTEL:** Is everybody O.K.? Is everybody all right? Don't be nervous, we are going to have a great show.

**STAGE MANAGER:** All right, everybody, stand by for places! *(Waits for everyone to take their place on the set.)* Five, four, three, two, one.... Music Cue!

*(Oprah Winfrey theme, "I'm Every Woman," comes on. Panelists continue to smile brightly, oblivious. STAGE MANAGER is furious.)*

**STAGE MANAGER:** No! No! No! The Wimpey music, you fools! This is the Mantel Wimpey Show! — Wimpey, not Winfrey, you illiterates!

**STAGE MANAGER:** *(under her breath)* Shit!

*(Winfrey theme comes to a screeching halt. MANTEL smiles murderously. Correct music comes on suddenly.)*

**STAGE MANAGER:** *(mouthing to Camera Person)* Fired! You're fired. It's Wimpey, you jerk!

**CAMERA PERSON:** Five, four, three, two, one...rolling!

*(A few minutes of music as MANTEL comes "on," dancing the merengue and flashing a huge smile to his audience.)*

**MANTEL:** Hello, how are you? Everybody up for a good time? Let's get up and move, come on, everybody, let's get warm. *(MANTEL invites the audience to dance; music dies down.)* Welcome to the Wimpey...Mantel Wimpey Show, where we lay it all out on the table.

*(applause)*

**MANTEL:** Our topic for today is "Children and the Environment." "Save the Environment" has become the battle cry of the decade. Are children the biggest pollution in our lives? Some people regard today's youth as toxic menaces to society. We have with us today an average American family: A loving mother, *(FATHER clears throat discreetly)*, a hard-working father *(MOTHER rolls her eyes)*, and two sons who the "well-adjusted" citizen might call a threat to the very core of the American dream...not a pretty sight, compadres! Please welcome Mr. and Mrs. Rebuelo, his 14-year-old son, Rosendo...

**WALTER:** *Walter!* *(FATHER hits him on the leg, trying to make it look "fatherly," and smiles.)*

**MANTEL:** Excuse me.... *Walter...* and his 11-year-old-son, Kane. *(Both parents look at each other in confused horror.)*

**MOTHER:** Excuse me, Señor Wimpey...his name is Rolando.

**ROLANDO:** No, it's not. *(ROLANDO starts kung-fu motions. MANTEL smiles, a little confused.)*

**MANTEL:** So tell us, Mr. Rebuelo, what is the problem with your kids that brings you the point of desperation, and how do you handle it?

**FATHER:** Well, Señora, we don't know what to do. My sons are out of control. One

doesn't like to go to school. He gets bored, he burns things down.... He got caught recently with a gun and then with a homemade grenade. Rosendo, he likes school, but he makes his teachers nervous. He chases after them, even into the teachers' lounge, after they drink their soda.

**MANTEL:** Why does he do that?

**FATHER:** Would you believe to make sure they recycle their cans. And God forbid he finds one with a Styrofoam cup! Dios mío!

**MOTHER:** He's always telling us to think eco...eco...eco...que? (to FATHER)

**WALTER:** Ecologically, mother.

**MOTHER:** Bueno, así! He's telling us that the vegetables I plant in the backyard are no good, that they're poisoned! Can you imagine that? I would never do that to my family! Señora, we don't have the money to fix our car. So it throws out a lot of smoke, what can we do? Now he's mad at me like it's my fault. And I can't even begin to tell you about the wild things he says...that I'm one of those who makes holes in the sky! Imagínese! And me so short, how could I reach that high?

**MANTEL:** You got a point there...holes in the sky? (confused)

**FATHER:** Would you believe? She's becoming mentally ill over this. Es cosa seria!

**MANTEL:** Walter...I mean, Rosendo...please explain the holes in the sky to us.

**WALTER:** It's *Walter*. Well, my parents don't understand that our planet is in great danger. We live in an era of contamination. People are not conscious of how even sprays can destroy our protective ozone layer. Pretty soon we're going to be living in a planet like Venus with a greenhouse effect. Cancer is on the rise....

**MOTHER:** There he goes with his astrology again!

**WALTER:** Mother! For once, let me talk! This is my chance, finally, to warn the world! Ozone is the layer that protects the earth from the harmful rays of the sun and from global warming. If we're not careful, the earth will become hotter and hotter and evaporate all the water. We will be like a desert and all the little children will be suffering from skin cancer at a very young age. Even now, kids in this community don't have shady trees to play under because we're cutting them down like mad. And the birds who live in the trees have no place to go now, so they're becoming extinct.

**ROLANDO:** We're all becoming extinct.

**MANTEL:** Oh, no! Oh, no! I love birds. (crying) Oh, birds.

**FATHER:** Cosa seria!

**MANTEL:** What's that?

**MOTHER:** (Going to hug MANTEL) Ay, Señora Wimpey, the situation with Rolandito is unbearable! He smokes, he drinks; sometimes I think he's on drugs....

**ROLANDO:** I don't do drugs! It's a natural high!

**MOTHER:** Whatever you want to call it, it's not what you should be doing! He's in and out of juvenile hall — he knows all the cops by their first name. Last week the FBI paid a....

**MANTEL:** The FBI!

**MOTHER:** Sssh! Yes, they paid a visit to my husband. Would you believe that

somebody heard Rolando say he was going to burn down Governor Wilson's house?  
He has no respect! (*Beginning to cry*)

**FATHER:** Cálmate, gordita! (*ROLANDO reaches out to touch her and she slaps his hand.*)

**MANTEL:** We're going to take a commercial break, and when we come back, we'll talk with the Chief of Police and we'll hear Rolando "Kane" Rebuelo's side of the story on the Mantel Wimpey Show!

(*Guests leave. A father and son enter with fishing gear. They start fishing in front of a sign that reads "NO FISHING! TOXIC WATER!"*)

**FATHER:** Oye m'ijo, que dice en ese aviso?

**SON:** Ay! Yo no sé, papá.

**FATHER:** Hijo, le voy a enseñar a pescar cuando le pique, lo hala.

**SON:** Papá, papá! Me está picando.

**FATHER:** Pues rásquese, m'ijo.

**SON:** No papá, el pescado.

**FATHER:** (*todo contento*) Hálelo, hálelo, que el mío también me está picando.

**SON:** (*todo contento*) Mira que grande!

**FATHER:** Ay, m'ijo, mira el mío. No sirve. Está muerto.... Bueno, m'ijo, pero vamos a casa que el suyo está bueno, bonito, y rechulo. (*Walking away, father stops and turns around.*) Oye, hijo, y que chingados dirá ahí.

**SON:** Ay, no sé, papá, vamos a comernos el pescado.

(*Return to MANTEL WIMPEY SHOW. The Rebuelo family is joined by CHIEF ESCOBA.*)

**CAMERA PERSON:** Three seconds Wimpey. Three, two, one....

**MANTEL:** Chief Escoba! We're so glad you could make it on today's show. By the way, what does your name mean in Spanish?

**CHIEF:** (*answering between teeth*) Broom.

**MANTEL:** Pardon?

**ROLANDO:** Broom!! As in vacuum cleaner.

**MANTEL:** Well, I think it's just so great that you came to the show. With the aftershock of last week's "incident," your campaign must be suffering. Those rumors were unreal!

**CHIEF:** Yes, well...

**MANTEL:** To say you ignored the 911 call, when the community is all aware of how strict your work policies are!

**CHIEF:** Yes, ridiculous! I...

**MANTEL:** And how you're so loyal to your officers when they're accused of discrimination and police brutality charges.

**CHIEF:** Discrimination and police brutality do not exist in my department.

**MANTEL:** And to prove the quality of your department, we have here one of your well-known delinquents, Rolando Kane Rebuelo.

**ROLANDO:** Hey, chief.

(*CHIEF looks mortified, but smiles.*)

**MANTEL:** Hey little Cholo! It seems you've made quite a name for yourself.

**ROLANDO:** I guess so.

**MANTEL:** The FBI is following you around? I'm impressed! Cuénteme, what is this I hear about you wanting to torch Governor Wilson's house? Did I hear correctly?

**ROLANDO:** Man, don't even mention that viejo cochino!

**FATHER:** Cállese, menso!

**WALTER:** (*admiringly*) All right!

**CHIEF:** Look, you little thug....

**MANTEL:** Whoa! Where is this coming from?

**ROLANDO:** You know...we were here first, man! Before the borders, before la migra, and before Pete Wilson! He wants us outa here, or at least caged up till we die, just like the birds, man!

**AUDIENCE MEMBER 1:** I am with Pete, you immigrant, you don't belong here! (*yelling out*)

**ROLANDO:** This used to be our land. Once, we were like the eagles, free, strong, and proud — we could sing, you know? My brother is right, we are becoming extinct just like the birds and nobody cares, not even my papa. So why should I care, man? Where will it get me?

**MANTEL:** You're a smart kid. What's wrong with obeying the law and getting good grades? You could do it.

**MOTHER:** That's what I tell him.

**ROLANDO:** Wilson doesn't want us to get educated, man. We're not good enough.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER 1:** (*yelling out*) Because you don't want to learn, you little Cholo! Out of here!

**MANTEL:** Be quiet you little audience, it's not your turn to talk. (*To ROLANDO*) Have you tried to see things from your parents' point of view?

**ROLANDO:** Well, I think I understand my parents better than they understand me.

**MANTEL:** Why do you say that?

**ROLANDO:** I don't see why I shouldn't drink or smoke. My father drinks and smokes all the time...gets into fights. I pretty much do everything they do, I just do it bigger.

**MOTHER:** How could you say such a thing when I don't even know where you are.

**ROLANDO:** Well, I hang out with my homeboys.

**MANTEL:** Do you hang out with your brother?

**ROLANDO:** Yeah, I listen to my brother talk about how everything is polluted and we need to fix things...but how are we going to fix things when the parents can't even pay the rent.

**FATHER:** Be quiet, don't say anything personal.... Besides, your mama pays the rent.

**MANTEL:** Do you like school?

**ROLANDO:** I like school, but teachers get in the way, so why should I go?

**MANTEL:** To go to college!

**ROLANDO:** But, we're so poor and I'll never be able to afford college. Might as well get used to my barrio and get ahead my way.

**MANTEL:** And what is your way?

**ROLANDO:** Well.... (*thinking*) My homeboys and me, we invent things.

**MANTEL:** Yeah? Like what?

**ROLANDO:** Lots of things.... We've got this *tight* slingshot, man. It's hella big and takes out anything in its way!

**MANTEL:** What do you use it for?

**ROLANDO:** We use it to chase people that come around the neighborhood who don't belong. I gotta story to tell you about one of my homies, man. A coupla weeks ago, some of my brother's friends, some old dude and a couple of crazy rucas came by taking pictures of the barrio...didn't even ask permission, man!

**MANTEL:** Why should they ask for permission to walk around the barrio?

**ROLANDO:** I bet if I walk around your neighborhood I wouldn't get out of there without getting into trouble or getting arrested. So, we have our regulations, too. You know what I'm saying, so one of my homies took the camera from the old dude.

(*CHIEF sits up in sudden attention*)

**MANTEL:** Wait a minute! No one tried to stop him?

**ROLANDO:** Man, he clowned them big time! Kept saying he would take their picture and the old dude fell for it. It was kinda funny, you know? But my homeboy shouldn't have done that, man, even if those people were crazy: they was with my brother...and I heard later, he didn't get much money for it.

**CHIEF:** How do you know? Who was he? How much did he get?

**ROLANDO:** Hey! We got a code of honor, jefa! You know, I can't betray that. Anyway, I got im-mun-i-ty to come here. That's what la Wimpey told me.

**MANTEL:** (*as CHIEF rises, gripping her seat in anger*) Hold on, hold on, here! Chief Escoba, does this sort of robbery surprise you, right under your nose? What kind of solution do you propose.... What do you have to say to these kids?

**CHIEF:** First of all...this Walter is mentally ill. He's out of touch with reality and a potential danger to society. We don't have any toxic wastes in our neighborhoods! The city sees to that! And as for some ozone layer, spare me! I've got enough to worry about with vandals like his no-good brother, every time I turn around! That Rolando is a troublemaker. I have here warrants for his arrest: first of all, for violating his probation and now, for suspicion of arson.

**ROLANDO:** I got immunity.

**CHIEF:** Shut up, Kane. (*ROLANDO does a kung fu move of strength*)

**MOTHER:** Don't call him that! His name is Rolando!

**CHIEF:** We have to accept that these kids are losers. Whatever you do to help them is never enough. You can lock them up, but once they're out, they're back dealing drugs out of their school lockers. So much for education! We try to help them — at the taxpayer's expense, mind you! (*Motioning to herself and everyone in the room*) — we pay attention to them, we respect them...and it's never enough!

**MANTEL:** What, then, is the future for young Latinos?

**CHIEF:** I believe they won't live to see their kids grow up.

**MANTEL:** So what are you proposing, Chief?

**CHIEF:** Throw them all in boot camp! That's what I say! Throw their asses in the can and throw away the key.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER 2:** Right on sister! Go girl, I'm with you. Kick them out!

**MANTEL:** (*angry*) I told you to shut up. You realize that the price of vegetables is going to go up.... (*composing himself*) What's the solution, then?

**CHIEF:** Bypass the "three strikes and you're out" and enforce one strike you're in!

**WALTER:** Whoa! You're crazy, lady! (*shakes his head*) I wouldn't say that with the election right around the corner, Chief!

**CHIEF:** Don't think the community doesn't agree with me!

**MANTEL:** And here to talk about just how our neighborhoods feel is community leader and member of LACA, Lorenzo Bacalao. We will return following a commercial announcement. (*CHIEF buries her head in her hands for a minute and then stares expressionless straight ahead.*)

(*Guests leave the stage and CHIEF remains to deliver a campaign announcement.*)

**CHIEF:** (*All of the text in parentheses is recorded playback.*) Chief Escoba for Mayor! If you vote for me, I promise, I'll keep kids out of trouble. (Yeah, I'll put them all in jail.) I'll help to clean up the toxic waste. (Do they really think I'm gonna keep toxic waste out of this community?) We'll clean up crime and drugs from the streets. (Yeah sure, and stop my payoff.) I promise to clean up the streets from violence.

(*Return to MANTEL WIMPEY SHOW*)

**MANTEL:** Welcome back to the show. (*LORENZO begins to enter*) Let's give a warm welcome to Lorenzo Bacalao, secretary of the new LACA and PCA. Tell the audience a little about LACA, Lorenzo. To begin with, what does LACA stand for?

**LORENZO:** Latinos for Agua and Clean Aire.

(*WALTER, who has been slouching for the last while, sits up with great admiration and interest as soon as LACA is mentioned. AUDIENCE cheers. LORENZO smiles.*)

**MANTEL:** You certainly have a lot of supporters.

**LORENZO:** Yes, sir. People have become more and more fed up with the pollution in our environment. Our numbers have grown, especially after last week's "incident."

**WALTER:** Cool!

**FATHER:** What incident are you talking about?

**CHIEF:** Rumors! Pure rumors!

**MANTEL:** (*trying to change the subject*) Why don't you tell us how LACA started, Mr. Bacalao?

**LORENZO:** It all started six months ago when it came to our attention that the Slick and Smooth Paint Company had started paying people who became sick as a result of last year's chemical spill. So I thought about what was happening and came up with an answer.

**MANTEL:** So, what's the answer?

**WALTER:** (*waives his hand and says*) I know, I know....

**MOTHER:** Shut up, Rosendo.

**LORENZO:** The answer was LACA: Latinos for Agua and Clean Aire. With this new

idea, I went to people's homes and asked them if they wanted to join me in this project. With LACA, I will try to get the people to help clean and fight against chemical and toxic companies. It's very interesting to hear you insist that there's no toxic waste, Esther. It's no secret that people can't even go fishing anymore because of the chemical pollutants — like lead — that cause massive poisoning.

**WALTER:** (*interrupting*) Yeah, yeah, I caught a dead fish.

**LORENZO:** In fact, Walter here keeps track of new problem sites for me. He's one of my hardest workers.

**MOTHER:** De veras?

**CHIEF:** That figures!

**WALTER:** Yeah! Mr. Bacalao lets me handle the Neighborhood Protest Hotline and I get to play detective to suspect offenders.

**MANTEL:** You do this all by yourself?

**WALTER:** Well, sometimes Grandma Georgie helps me.

**MANTEL:** Really? I thought you told the producers that your grandmom is dead.

**LORENZO:** We seem to have attracted several families with problem children. So we created a group called PCA: Problem Child Attack. In this group, problem children talk about their families and feelings. Sometimes we get kids who are in gangs and live their lives in Hell. I think these kids are really smart, but they need attention. I work with them everyday. I make them relax and they are encouraged to talk to each other.

**MANTEL:** So, what do they talk about?

**ROLANDO:** Girls.

**LORENZO:** Most of the time they talk about their problems, so I tell them to look for the good side. It works very well...most of the time. One of the first kids in our group has decided to become a doctor; and, as you can see, I'm very proud of Walter, here. This group is one of the best things a problem child can be a part of without creating hassles for others.

**MANTEL:** I think this gentleman deserves an applause!

**LORENZO:** I thank you!

**FATHER:** Wait a minute! Wait a minute! My life has been nothing but hassles. This group has turned my son into a Buddha! He's not Rosendo anymore.... No! He's ashamed of his background. He's gotta be el Walter Picado el goddamn síquico. (*WALTER glares at him.*)

**MANTEL:** So, he is a psychic. Well, Walter, I met this cute guy last night. Can you tell me if I should go for it?

**FATHER:** Don't waste your time, Mantel. Do you think he could slip me one little Lotto jackpot — but no! And the other one thinks he's the King Kong fu: el "Citizen Kane" gavacho ese, you know...who thinks he's a Chino? (*MOTHER cries.*) They've got an identity crisis. We try to understand them, but it's impossible. And we're the ones who get blamed, but it's not us! We didn't give them that kind of education. I'm with the Chief! Send them to boot camp!

**MOTHER:** (*with sudden strength*) No!! I'll take a chance with Mr. Bacalao. What else

can I do? I have two crazy kids and a husband who is always drinking beer and asking me for money. My husband hasn't worked a steady job for three years.

**FATHER:** Didn't I work for four straight days last summer?

**MOTHER:** It was four hours. He's always drunk and the kids are always getting in trouble at school. I make what little money I can with my job dry cleaning, but it's barely enough to buy food and maybe pay the bills, maybe not. I've gotten used to hiding the rent money from Luis, because when Luis feels depressed, he gambles.

**FATHER:** Who wouldn't get depressed with all your nagging.

**MOTHER:** My husband is always acting like we are rich and saying that we can buy anything because we have a lot of money. Yeah, sure! Who knows where else he gets it...or who else he spends it on. But my husband was not always like that. He changed. He says that the kids drive him crazy and that that's why he is like that. I feel like I don't have a family anymore! If la LACA can help me to change things, I'm for LACA.

**MANTEL:** Somebody in the audience wants to ask a question. O.K., go ahead.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER 3:** Mrs. Rebuelo, I think you should dump your husband and take care of your sons. I think that Walter sounds like a really good kid. Walter, honey, you shouldn't let anybody tell you you're mentally ill. I think following your teachers is wonderful. You, sir, go get a job! Stop living off your wife. And you, little Cholo, change your clothes.

**MANTEL:** What do you have to say? You heard the comments and the Rebuelo's point of view.

**LORENZO:** No one knows what to do with these kids, how to handle them. Everyone thinks of them as problem children, but what they are is lonely. That's where PLA comes in. We take in these kids, we give them snacks, we listen to them, we love them.... We even prepare them to leave home if they have to!

**CHIEF:** That's just great! You throw them out on the streets and then leave the city with the headache! Mr. Bacalao, I know you mean well, but do us all a favor and don't be so radical. Leave the handling of these kids to us. Don't waste your time. They don't deserve respect! That Rolando is a troublemaker! He's always hanging around the gangs, always talking back to authorities, a car thief...

**MANTEL:** So what are you gonna do about it?

**CHIEF:** We put him on probation for stealing a car, being his first offense, but he violated his probation.... We issued a warrant for his arrest and we'll send him to juvenile hall for three months and six more months of probation.

**MANTEL:** We have some more questions.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER 4:** Chief, don't you think these kids are crying for respect?

**CHIEF:** We "respected" him...oh, yes! We sent him back to school, and a few months later we found him with a 38-special and a pound of coke. And now he's threatening to burn down the governor's mansion? All we recommend is to keep him locked up until he shows "improvement." What a relief it will be to be able to enjoy my morning donuts without having to worry about what Rolando might be up to today!

**ROLANDO:** Maybe I should burn down yours, instead! Babosa!

**CHIEF:** Keep it up, Cholo! You won't have immunity forever! I'm gonna catch you someday. In fact, I'm gonna catch you right now.

*(ROLANDO and CHIEF begin fighting.)*

**MANTEL:** *(trying to pull them apart)* Call security!

**CHIEF:** I'm the security around here, Baboso.

**MANTEL:** Where is the doctor? Call the doctor! Doctor, Doctor.... Back in "five" with our next guest, Dr. Wilma Wastefime, on the "Mantel Wimpey Show."

*(Guests clear stage for commercial. Two actors enter to do the commercial.)*

We have been studying a lot of young people and we have discovered that in California eight out of 10 people smoke marijuana. Five out of eight go to other drugs. Like we have said before, this is your *brain*. *(Shows a picture of an egg.)* This is your brain on drugs. *(Shows a picture of an egg being fried in a skillet.)* Any questions?

*(Return to MANTEL WIMPEY SHOW)*

*(On the show, MANTEL is seated next to DR. WASTEOTIME, who studies him seriously and analytically. The cameras are not rolling yet.)*

**MANTEL:** Dr. Wastefime, it's a pleasure to have you with us today.

*(Pause as all the guests adjust themselves in preparation. All arguments come to a halt and all stare ahead expectantly. MAKE-UP LADY scurries around WIMPEY with last-minute touchups. Cameras start rolling.)*

**MANTEL:** We have with us today Dr. Wastefime, a top child scientist and psychiatrist. Tell us, Dr. Wastefime, what in your opinion caused these massive disorders...or are these disorders?

**DR. WASTEOTIME:** Yes, indeed, Mr. Wimpey. We have here a classic case of delusional children in what they sadly view as a hostile environment. One child thinks that he's a psychic and the other thinks that he's a gangster. In their attempt to escape from themselves, they've even chosen new names. It's very romantic, of course, but dangerously unrealistic. They've resorted to burning houses and using weapons. I'm here to help them work through their negative obsessions and to focus on healthy, unthreatening social behavior.

**MANTEL:** And how do you intend to do this, Doctor?

**DR. WASTEOTIME:** I've been experimenting with brain cells. I believe that the cells of the right brain are contaminated with those ideas. I came out with a "stanacane pill" to remove negative ideas from the brain. We've done experiments on monkeys, but never on humans. *(Looks at ROLANDO, and smiles excitedly.)* I have been wanting to test this medication on a human child for a long time; it's just been a matter of finding the right subject. Clearly, this little boy displays all signs of becoming a classic socio-psychopath in need of immediate behavior modification.

*(DR. WASTEOTIME calmly opens bag and starts taking out operating equipment.)*

**MOTHER:** Dios mío!

**WALTER:** Wait just a minute! That's my brother you're talking about!

**LORENZO:** This is insane! All children have rights!

**CHIEF:** Says who?

**DR. WASTEOFTIME:** Don't worry. One pill is enough to prevent them from doing crazy things. It makes them calm and open to positive suggestion...sort of like a holistic lobotomy!

**MOTHER:** Do you really think it would help?

**DR. WASTEOFTIME:** Believe me, madam, I am quite serious. If we don't take these steps right away, it's only a matter of time before his abusive behavior will begin to surface.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER 5:** Chief Escoba, I think Mr. Bacalao has some wonderful ideas and you should hire him to clean up your act. Mr. Bacalao, keep it up! And you, Doctor, you should go back to your lab and chase rats and stop messing with our kids' brains. You should be ashamed of yourself, comparing the future of America with monkeys.

**LORENZO:** (*sarcastically*) Yeah, Doctor, why don't you just put pins on his head and give him shock treatment?!

**DR. WASTEOFTIME:** Mr. Bacalao, you read my mind! Actually, I had that in mind for the other one, to stimulate his senses back to the present instead of the future.

**WALTER:** No one is going to make a pinhead out of me! And my brother's no psycho! You are! Grandma Georgie, come!

**FATHER:** No! No!

**DR. WASTEOFTIME:** I'm in the right place for my experiment.

**FATHER:** (*to MOTHER*) They're your children!

**MOTHER:** If you had spent more time with your family, instead of with las viejas esas, this wouldn't be happening!

**WALTER:** (*louder*) Grandma Georgie! Come on, Rolando, help me out, man!

(*DR. WASTEOFTIME suddenly starts to feel weird, almost sick. WALTER becomes quiet, peaceful.*)

**ROLANDO:** Grandma Georgie! Grandma Georgie! Grandma Georgie!!

**BOTH:** *Grandma Georgie! Grandma Georgie! Grandma Georgie! Grandma Georgie!*

(*DR. WASTEOFTIME opens mouth to talk, but no sound comes out. WALTER gets up and stands behind DR. WASTEOFTIME, speaking for her.*)

**GRANDMA GEORGIE:** (*GRANDMA GEORGIE starts shaking and making loud sounds.*) I'm here, my darlings.

**MANTEL:** Oh, my God, Stage Manager! Stage Manager! Call the paramedics, call 911! Somebody is having contortions.

(*FATHER gives a terrible cry of pain and defeat.*)

**GRANDMA:** Cállate, vieja! Let me get comfortable in this strange lady's body.

(*WALTER makes some transitional sounds, then GRANDMA GEORGIE coughs and begins to speak.*)

**MANTEL:** This is a first time ever, ladies and gentlemen! (*to STAGE MANAGER in the wings*) Call the press!

(*MAKE-UP LADY comes out within view of audience, eating cookies and staring in*

*disbelief*)

**GRANDMA:** I apologize, dear grandson, for taking so long and not coming forth earlier, but this lady's system was too full of valium. Oh! It's so nice to have a voice again!

**WALTER:** Grandma Georgie! Cool!

**GRANDMA:** Yes, dear. (*stretching experimentally, getting used to physical body*)  
(*MAKE-UP LADY, who has moved to join the CAMERA PERSON to get a better view.*)

**WALTER:** God, Grandma Georgie, it's good to talk to you!

**GRANDMA:** (*hugging him*) Walter, I'm so proud of you!

**WALTER:** Rosendo to you, Grandma!

**GRANDMA:** I'm honored.

**ROLANDO:** Hi, Grandma! I'm Rolando.

**GRANDMA:** (*hugging him*) Rolandito!

**CHIEF:** This woman is unreal!

**GRANDMA:** Oh, but I'm very real, Esther Escoba! Reality is not only what you can see with the naked eye, but what you feel in your heart, what you know to be true.... Exposing the real sickness in society and the environment, like my grandson Walter is trying to do, and like that Señor Bacalao. And as for dealing with the Rolandos of the world, you people have certainly bungled that!

**CHIEF:** I can't take this any more! (*frightened, but trying to cover*)

**GRANDMA:** But you must. Rolandito is not a bad boy; he's simply searching for a direction. He's crying for a vision; he's crying for his culture, isn't that true, m'ijito? He doesn't burn things because he wants to destroy. He burns because he's burning inside. He hurts people because he's hurting inside.

**CHIEF:** So what do they really want?

**GRANDMA:** What he really wants in his own way is to create. What Rolandito needs is love and support, for people to put their faith in him to do good. I was so encouraged, for example, when he spoke of his home-brother being wrong in stealing the camera and of feeling somewhat responsible. That's a start!

**ROLANDO:** My homie, Grandma!

**GRANDMA:** Yes, dear. (*continuing with CHIEF*) You know, I couldn't understand at first *why* you seemed so threatened by Mr. Bacalao....

**CHIEF:** (*insulted*) "Threatened"?

**GRANDMA:** ...until I realized that you are a member of the Board of the Slick and Smooth Paint Company.

**LORENZO:** (*to himself*) That's it! The missing link!

**CHIEF:** And I've been doing everything I can to keep them on track.

**GRANDMA:** Yes. One might even call it the betting track, mightn't one? It was you who arranged for certain well-chosen companies to sell pollution credits to Slick and Smooth so that they would get tax write-offs.

**WALTER:** What?!

**GRANDMA:** For which you were paid quite well. In fact, you were paid so well that you found ways time and time again to trick environmental control agencies and Green

Peace, so that they never found out about the Slick and Smooth employee death rates and brain retardation caused by massive lead poisoning in and around the plant.

**WALTER:** Grandma Georgie! Was that *lead* I saw coming up through the asphalt near the backyard of the Garcia family?

**GRANDMA:** It certainly was, Rosendo.

*(Phones suddenly start ringing off the hook. STAGE MANAGER starts motioning madly to MANTEL from offstage.)*

**MANTEL:** There go the phones, ladies and gentlemen! They're ringing off the wall! Unbelievable what has come out today. It will certainly make the top story on tonight's evening news and tomorrow's headlines for all the major newspapers! Mr. Bacalao, can I have your reaction here?

**LORENZO:** This is environmental racism, RAZA! We see so many examples throughout this country like the Slick and Smooth Paint Company, which built ghettos for their workers on company land...land which they have filled with chemicals, oils, lead waste, and other pollutants.

**ROLANDO:** You're right, Señor Bacalao, we need to clean up the ghettos.

**LORENZO:** These neighborhoods have become today's cities, and it's these companies that still control our lives and our health. They buy legal tax write-offs, which help them pollute more, and we're the ones who suffer! What are we going to do about it?

**ROLANDO:** I'm with you, man! Viva la Raza! The Human Raza. I invent things, man, me and my friends. We'll work with you if you work with us. I don't usually admit this to nobody, man, but I get A's in science! I can't help it! But now I'm glad, 'cause I can study about this lead shit and make a difference for my neighborhood, man. I feel *good!*

**WALTER:** That's my brother. We're gonna clean this up together and bring down the people responsible for Grandmom's cancer.

**MOTHER:** Here he goes with his astrology again.

**MANTEL:** Here you have it, señoras y señores: a "homie" who is willing to turn himself around in a fight for life! Hey there, Georgie girl! Let's give her a hand. Georgie, it is a privilege to have you as our unexpected guest. Do you have any final words to leave us with?

**GEORGIE:** Thank you, Mantel, for providing the right vibrations for me to materialize today. I bless this poor, misguided doctor whose body I have inhabited. When she "comes to," she will remember everything that happened and her understanding will be expanded as a result.

*(A merengue starts playing, gradually getting louder.)*

**GEORGIE:** Never mind that now! Dance with me and be happy!

**MANTEL:** Come on, señoras y señores! Everybody dance! *(LORENZO bows to MOTHER, and joins the dance.)* Let's show the world how it's done on the "Mantel Wimpey Show," where we lay it all out on the table.