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To the editor:

***Cinco de Mayo** means the 5th of May. It is a day and holiday that commemorates a single victorious battle by Mexico over France. It does not commemorate Mexico's independence from Spain or France.*

Mexico won its independence from Spain on Sept. 16, 1821 - a day known as el Diez y Sies. After 1821, Mexico struggled as a new republic recovering from 300 years of Spanish colonialism. Mexico was in debt and for several decades, its citizens debated and shed blood over the question of what kind of government and class relations it needed. Mexico suffered a major setback in 1836 when it lost the territory Coahuila y Tejas (now known as Texas). And in 1848 Mexico lost most of the area now known as the American South-west. Mexico's troubles were not over.

In the 1860s, Mexico was still not free from foreign debt, control and imperialism. During the midst of the U.S. Civil War, France saw an opportunity to colonize Mexico. Mexico was in arrears of its debt to France, England, and Spain. President Benito Juarez suspended debt payments. Some Mexican conservatives facilitated the idea of French rule over the nation and France sent 2,500 troops to occupy Mexico City. At Puebla a battle ensued.

Mexico was finally victorious; it won the battle at Puebla on May 5, 1862. Civilians and soldiers joined their leader General Ignacio Zaragoza, who was born in Coahuila y Tejas.

Mexico won the battle at Puebla on **Cinco de Mayo** but lost the war to France. The imperialist power made Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian of Austria Mexico's emperor and he ruled over Mexico until 1867 when he was shot by a Mexican firing squad, his body shipped back to Europe.

Research by New Mexico Highlands University historian Anselmo F. Arellano suggests that Hispanos in New Mexico have a history of celebrating **Cinco de Mayo** in the past and present. According to Arellano, in the 1880s and 1890s Hispanos traveled to Mexico and Chihua-hua, Mexico City and Aguas Caliente to participate in the fiestas patrias (patriotic festivities). In the 20th century, southern New Mexicans have celebrated the 5th with greater fervor. Today, Roswell and Mesilla sponsor major community-wide celebrations. Thanks to the Chicano Movement, more New Mexicans are learning about Mexican history and how the state's history is interwoven with Mexico's past.

**Cinco de Mayo** is a day for all Americans to celebrate. It is a day colonialism was defeated. Just like our ancestors who fought for a United States, the people of Mexico have also fought for freedom and self-determination. Celebrate Cinco in Ruidoso by attending the celebration at Ruidoso High this Saturday. Let's get 1,300 people of all ethnic backgrounds in Ruidoso to celebrate Cinco. Que Viva el **Cinco de Mayo!**

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Ruidoso

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