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29 junio 2012

Deutsche Welle



This Sunday Mexicans go to the polls to choose their next president, who will serve a non-renewable six-year term known as a *sexenio*. Who are the three candidates and what do they stand for?

The three main candidates have been trudging the campaign trail for three grueling months. It honed and hardened them for two televised debates in which they verbally sideswiped each other with relish.

Night by night we saw their public faces on television, while on the streets in the metro stations and on swirling overhead banners, their portraits were often defaced, with blackened-out teeth, false moustaches and eyes bored out.

But who are the real people behind these public masks? Colleagues and friends, privy to varying degrees of closeness with them, are determined to be supportive and not drop any last minute clangers, but every now and then the veneer slips for a moment...or two.

Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador is the Candidate for the leftist Party of Democratic Revolution (PRD). A former Mayor of Mexico City, he ran for the presidency six years ago, and was pipped at the post by a razor thin 0.56 percent margin.

Protesting activists loyal to him then occupied tents along 12 kilometers of Avenida Reforma - Mexico City's main thoroughfare, for three months. Lopez Obrador, known as AMLO, swears that he's since matured and mellowed.

Founder of PRD, son of a famous president and three times presidential contender in his own right, Cuauhtemoc Cardenas has known AMLO since 1988. "He's a very good organizer. It's also easy for him to talk with people. He's a good listener and a good communicator. Andres Manuel is a hard worker. All day long he can do any activity related to politics," Cardenas told DW.

"I think he's a little stubborn. We all are, but I think he's a little more so than most of us. When he decides to do something, he goes straight. He doesn't turn around or reflect, think or discuss with others, if that's the right decision, or not the right decision," he adds.

Lorenzo Meyer, a professor of political history at the prestigious College of Mexico, also knows AMLO well. "He's not interested in



Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, founder of the PRD, knows Obrador intimately