

A Personal Testimonio: The Convergence of the Chicano Movement, Chicano Studies and the Xicano/a Cultural Renaissance in Austin, Texas 1972-1980, and Their Legacy

Juan Tejada

Abstract: From 1972 to 1980, I lived and worked in Austin, first as a student at the University of Texas, then as a Chicano Movement activist and cultural worker that participated in various aspects of the Xicano/a Cultural Renaissance in the East Austin Mexicano/Chicano community. This personal testimonio chronicles those years and the important work we did as young poets, writers, artists, musicians, muralists, danzantes, activists, organizers and arts administrators with such organizations and projects as the first Mexican American Cultural Committee at the University of Texas (UT) in Austin, MAYO (Mexican American Youth Organization), CASA (first, Chicano Art Students Association at UT, then Chicanos Artistas Sirviendo a Aztlán), the Conjunto Aztlan, Festival Estudiantil Chicano de Arte y Literatura (a city-wide festival of Chicano art and literature for grades K-12 with the Austin Independent School District), Xinachtli (the first Mexica-Azteca Conchero dance group in Texas), and LUChA (League of United Chicano Artists). This early work served as a training ground for many of us in the furtherance of the social justice and liberation ideals and goals of the Chicano Movement, which has continued to guide us and manifest itself in our life's work in the Xicanx Arts, Chicano/a/x Studies and various cultural arts organizations across the state and nation over the last fifty years.

1972: My Introduction to the University of Texas in Austin, the Chicano Movement and Chicano Studies

I arrived at the University of Texas in Austin as an eighteen-year-old freshman in the fall of 1972. Having been born and raised on the southside of San Antonio, Texas where I attended Catholic schools from 1st-12th grades, first at St. Leo's in the barrio on S. Flores St., then at Central Catholic High School where I had just graduated from, I was excited to be in Austin living with a camarada from high school, Victor Samano, in a small, off-campus efficiency apartment, and attending our first semester of classes at the flagship university in the state.

The 1970s were exciting times for a young Chicano to be at UT Austin. The Civil Rights Movement was in full swing at the university, across this state and nation, and around the world. Various peoples and justice movements were converging, including the Black Power,

Chicano, American Indian, Feminist and Environmental Movements. There were protests and marchas in the streets, at the university, state capitol, and in the East Austin barrio; protests against the War in Vietnam, against police brutality and violence, against the lack of Chicanos on campus, against the Boat Races in the barrio, and other issues. There was also the Hippie/Peace Movement, sex, drugs and rock-n-roll. Yes, these were exciting times.

Being from San Antonio, where the Mexicanos/Mexican Americans are the majority of the population and we had family and our cultura everywhere, Victor and I were sheltered from the culture shock we felt when we got to Austin and the University of Texas. Out of the 50,000 plus students that were there at the time, Chicanos comprised about less than half-of-one percent ($\frac{1}{2}$ of 1%) of the student population. This at a time when Mexican Americans and other Latinos were about 12% of the state population. Needless to say, we immediately gravitated to the Raza that was there and Raza student organizations.

That first year I started hanging around with students who were in MAYO, the Mexican American Youth Organization. Initially there were parties that MAYO hosted at different off-campus apartments and homes. Quickly, though, we began working with MAYO in support of Ramsey Muñiz's campaign for governor under La Raza Unida Party, and held a couple of presentations and meet and greets with Ramsey. I was also selected as the only freshman member of the first Mexican American Cultural Committee at UT Austin (the following year the name was changed to Chicano Cultural Committee). The Chairperson that first year was Frances Herrera. And I was a Student Government representative from my department (I think I was a Sociology major initially, though this changed various times during my first few years at UT).

I remember the first off-campus event I attended was to hear a Brown Beret speak. I don't recall who this person was except to say that he was from California and was wearing his brown beret and khaki brown uniform. He spoke about how the gringos had stolen our land and how the chotas were killing us in the streets and that we had to defend our people, the Chicanos, and our land, Aztlan, by any and all means necessary. This was the first time that I had heard of Aztlan.

That year I took my first Chicano History course with Dr. Gilberto Hinojosa y se me prendió el foco, as we say in the barrio. That was the first time in my life that I had taken a course that was teaching me about my own history, and my peoples' history, as Mexicanos/Mexican Americans/Chicanos within the United States. I learned that we were Indigenous to this land and that we had been on this continent for thousands of years and had grown corn to feed ourselves, and that we were astronomers and pyramid-builders, and great warriors that created grand civilizations of philosophers and artists, musicians and poets.

We learned of the Spanish invasion and so-called "Conquest" and colonization of the New World and Mexico Tenochtitlan in the early 1500s decimating our ancestros with their guns and horses and God and Catholic religion that was racist against the Indigenous people of this continent. We learned how they stole these lands from the Native people and committed genocide against them/us and set up their churches on top of our sacred spaces and temples and burned our "pagan" and "savage" books. We learned how the original Brown people of this land were relegated to virtual slaves to the Spanish Crown and Encomienda, and to the bottom of their white supremacy caste system. We learned of Mexico's independence from Spain in 1821; the battle of the Alamo in 1836 and the colonial settler slavers' Texian Republic; of

“Manifest Destiny” and the U.S.-Mexico War in 1846 which ended in 1848 with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and Mexico surrendering to the U.S. over half of its land, Indigenous land (the entire Southwest from Texas to California). And we also learned of the Indigenous and Mexican people’s resistance to this centuries-long history of violence, war, racism and colonization; how we survived, adapted and created new forms of cultural and artistic expressions; and how we fought for our human and civil rights in this country over the years, within organizations, as well as the broader Chicano Movement of the 60s and 70s.

While I was glad and excited that I was learning our history, it also pissed me off. I was angry that I had never been taught this before in the Catholic grade school, or high school, I attended. I was angry at the pinches Gachupines and the Catholic Church for perpetrating this racist land theft and genocide of the Native people, all under the guise of their God and religion. I was pissed that the U.S. schools punished my mom and me for speaking Spanish, that they changed our names from María to Mary, José to Joe, and Juan to John. I was pissed that the Catholic school I attended made me feel ashamed of taking tacos for lunch and I would hide under the stairwell to eat them, instead of eating in the cafeteria. I loved tacos de papas con huevo and chorizo con huevo, nonetheless, I told Amá to pack white bread sandwiches for my lunch. I was pissed that some of my friends were ridiculed for being a darker skin color: brown, the color of nuestra madre tierra. I was pissed that school made me feel ashamed of playing the button accordion and the Conjunto music, corridos and canciones that my father so loved. And I still carried the pain and trauma of my youth and the psychic and spiritual scars of racism and classism that made me feel ashamed of my parents and the fact that they were poorer, and that made me want to hide when my mother paid with food stamps at the grocery store. I was

pissed that the schools made me feel ashamed of my language, culture, food and music; made me feel ashamed of myself. It was through this first Chicano Studies course that I took at UT Austin that I began to understand who I was, and the history of my people. I began calling myself a Chicano and started on the road to reclaiming my identity, pride, and developing my social, cultural and political consciousness.

At the end of my first year at UT in 1973, I returned to my hometown of San Antonio for the summer where I worked at a southside recreation center. It had been a tough first year at UT, taking a full course load, working with MACC and MAYO and student government, and struggling with financial problems. I didn't get scholarships or grants, so I had to take out loans. Victor and I struggled to survive that first year, even though we did our fair share of getting stoned and partying with camaradas. I felt that I had overextended myself and that I needed to retrench and focus on my academic studies the second and third years in '74 and '75. And that's what I did. I took a full load of classes both years, changing my major each year from Sociology to Philosophy then English, and all the while I was taking all of the Chicano Studies courses that I could in Chicano History, Chicano Literature, Mexican American Politics, Mexican Folklore, Chicanos in Media, and others. I had begun writing a little bit, and even though I participated in some protests and marchas, supported the farmworker's boycotts, worked for a short while as a youth drug counselor with a paint sniffing program at the East Austin Mental Health Mental Retardation Center in 1974, and attended some of the readings and presentations at the Segundo Festival Floricanto in Austin in 1975, I wasn't as involved with different organizations as I was the first year.

1976: alurista's Chicano Poetry Class

It wasn't until I registered for a Chicano Poetry class in January, 1976 with the already (in)famous alurista, considered one of the first Poet Laureates of Aztlan, who was teaching at UT as a Guest Lecturer, that I reintegrated myself with the Chicano Movement as a writer, musician and organizer, and became part of the Xicano/a Cultural Renaissance in Austin.

Alurista's class was great. It was a small class of about 12 students and initially we met on campus and wrote and read our poetry and short stories to each other and gave feedback and criticism on our work. Later, we began meeting at alurista's house off-campus, or at one of the other student's houses where there was food, drink and smoking (both frajos and mota), and we would usually end up going on late into the night reading our sometimes tri-lingual works, playing music, talking identity, movimiento politics and ideology, and getting organized. It was alurista who turned us on to the spelling of the word Chicano with an X, Xicano, connecting the word, and us, to our MeXica/MeXicano Indigenous roots. It was in alurista's class that I met camaradas músicos, escritores y artistas like David Cavazos, Raquel Elizondo, Devón Peña and Pablo Torres de Laredo, as well as Janis Palma, Xelina, and Juan Pablo Gutiérrez. It was in his class that Devón, Larry Brannon and I began playing music together and writing songs that would eventually lead to forming our first band at UT Austin, In Lak' Ech, which later evolved into the Conjunto Aztlan. In alurista's class, I fell in love, renewed my commitment to the Movimiento Xicano and began working in the Chicano Arts for the betterment of our people and our barrios. I was guided by my Indigenous ancestors' teachings and beliefs that the poets, musicians and artists were the story-keepers and story-tellers of our Raza. I was guided by the concepts of In Tlilli in Tlapalli/Black Ink, Red Paint (metaphor for writing and the codices), and In Xochitl in Kuikatl/Flower and Song (metaphor and phrase for

poetry), from the great poets and philosophers of the Nahuatl-speaking people who sang:

Ika tlen niyazki	¿Con que he de irme?
Amitla ni ten yotilieu	¿Nada dejaré en pos de mí
tlakuitlapan tlallipan	sobre la tierra?
Kenin ki chua no yolotzin	¿Cómo ha de actuar mi corazón?
Azeh motopalli tiuahua nemiliz	¿Acaso en vano venimos a vivir,
In kueponiz tlallipan	a brotar aquí en la tierra?
Ti nezkayotituih xochimeh	¡Dejemos al menos flores!
Ti nezkayotituih kuikame	¡Dejemos al menos cantos!

At the end of alurista's course, we published a 52-page book of poetry and stories from the twelve student writers and alurista titled *Trece Aliens* (see Power Point image #1). I remember we typed everyone's sections of writings and each writer added their graphics. We xeroxed the manuscript and cover with an illustration by Cecilio García-Camarillo. We hand-collated and spiral-bound 100 copies of the publication at alurista's house (I still have two copies of this book). For most of us in the class, it was the first time that our work had been published, and it was our first foray into the world of independent Chicano/a publishing. *Trece Aliens* represented not only our first publication, but also the flowers and songs and "modern-day codices" that we were leaving behind for our Raza, for our children, and for all future generations.

CASA/Chicano Art Students Association at the University of Texas in Austin

In 1976 there was a student organization at UT called CASA, Chicano Art Students Association, comprised of mainly Chicana and Chicano visual arts students that were coordinating some exhibits on campus. Some of the principal artists involved were Santa Barraza, Sam Coronado, Silvia Orozco, Rey Gaytán, Victoria Plata, Raul Valdez, Pablo Torres and Janis Palma, among others. Pablo and Janis were part of the Trece Aliens in alurista's course and we began integrating writers and musicians into CASA. In 1976 we organized a CASA event on campus where we had a visual arts exhibition, poetry readings and music where our band, now named Reforma o Revolución, performed.

There was an ideological split in CASA at this time when certain artists like Raul Valdez advocated for taking our arts out of the university and putting them at the service of the Chicano community in East Austin. Raul was a muralist from Del Rio who, as a UT student, was already beginning to work with the schools and Brown Berets in East Austin where he began painting murals. He believed that art was for the people and that it shouldn't be confined to the elite and bourgeois walls of a gallery or a museum. Art should be free and exhibited on the walls in our community for all to see. Many of us were of the same mind as Raul and we felt the need to bridge the gap between the university and our people, our community.

This was part of a concept that we called the "Revolutionary Aesthetic": that we weren't creating art just for art's sake. Chicano Art (and literature, music, teatro, danza, etc.) had a higher calling and purpose: to be the voice of, and to serve, the Chicano people; and to provide a spiritual and political foundation to the Chicano Movement with its ideals of social justice, self-

determination, land rights and liberation. It was the responsibility of the artists to tell our stories, to document our reality, our histories and struggles. It was the responsibility of the artists to work with our community in solving the problems that existed there: poverty, lack of educational and economic opportunities, racism, sexism and discrimination, police brutality and violence, lack of adequate health care and housing, segregation, environmental racism, and the fact that our people/values/culture were not being positively reflected in the school curriculum and textbooks, if we were reflected at all. It was the responsibility of the artists to educate, levantar conciencia, and to give ánimo to our people. It was the responsibility of the artist to express the joy and love and beauty of our people and culture, and our hopes and dreams for a better future for our children, and for all.

While there were some Chicana/o art students that wanted to maintain a strictly visual arts focus to CASA, most of us wanted to expand the organization to include other art forms and begin working more in the Chicano community of East Austin. In 1977, CASA, Chicano Arts Students Association, became CASA, Chicanos Artistas Sirviendo a Aztlan. This shift in name reflected the shift and focus of the organization: from the university to the community. We were artists and cultural guerrilleros and workers for the Chicano people and the Chicano Nation of Aztlan. This was important because if the Chicano Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and '70s did anything, it 1) gave us our name, identity and pride in ourselves as Chicanos/as; 2) helped to develop not only our social, cultural and political conciencia as Xicanas/os, but, more importantly, developed our Indigenous conciencia: we are Indigenous People first; and 3) developed the concept of Aztlan, which gave us that national identity and collective consciousness as being a distinct Chicano people with Indigenous/Native ties to this land.

LUChA/League of United Chicano Artists and the Festival Estudiantil Chicano de Arte y Literatura

1976 was a pivotal year in the Chicano/a Cultural Renaissance in Austin. Raul Valdez had created a Chicano Murals Program in East Austin and was working with the Brown Berets, el Centro Chicano and others in the barrio to develop the idea for LUChA (League of United Chicano Artists), a non-profit multi-disciplinary arts organization.

Besides the murals program Raul directed, Juan Pablo Gutiérrez and alurista worked with LUChA in creating and implementing the First Festival Estudiantil Chicano de Arte y Literatura, an arts and literature festival that worked with teachers and students from K-12th grades in the Austin Independent School District (AISD). The idea of the festival was to have Chicano/a artists facilitate Chicano Art, Literature and History workshops in the schools for teachers and students in AISD, with the purpose of getting the students to create their own art and literature. There would then be an exhibit and selection process by grade level at each of the individual schools participating. The three top selections in art and literature from each grade level of the individual schools participating were then sent to a citywide contest where a final selection was made of the top three winners in art and literature from each grade level. These selections were exhibited at a final citywide awards program where there was food, music, and literary readings of the student's works. While there was a selection process to get the overall City-Wide Top Selections at each grade level, each student who participated at their individual schools also received a Certificate of Participation.

The festival was successful on many different levels: 1) It taught Chicano Art, Literature and History to the teachers and students at a time when the schools didn't have very many Ethnic or Cultural Studies in their curriculum and textbooks; 2) It got the students themselves to create art and literature; and 3) Maybe even more importantly, it got the students to learn about their own history, cultural identity and the arts, and to feel proud of who they are and proud of their own culture. We knew, even then, that teaching these students about their own history, culture and identity would develop their pride and self-esteem, which in turn would help them succeed in school and in life. For as Raul Valdez would often say: "You can't be proud of who you are, if you don't know who you are." The schools weren't doing this, so we had to.

In 1976 we had just published *Trece Aliens* and we were working with alurista in organizing the 3rd Festival Floricanto in San Antonio (where many of us *Trece Aliens* performed both as musicians and writers). Some of us Aliens were also working with CASA and began working with LUCHA and the Festival Estudiantil Chicano de Arte y Literatura that first year. One of the earliest events we organized in the East Austin community as CASA was Cantoleo '76 (see PP image # 2), where we had twenty writers, poets and musicians from Austin and San Antonio (including Carmen Tafolla, Cecilio and Mía García-Camarillo, Angélica Martínez, José Flores, Evey Chapa, Reyes Cardenas, Max Martínez, many of the *Trece Aliens*, and others) perform for the community at Zavala Elementary. This was our local response to the national Floricanto festivals.

It was around this time that la Sra. María Salinas and her Ballet Folclórico Aztlán de Tejas also became part of LUCHA. José Flores, who was a professor of English at Juárez-Lincoln University (located at the "entrance" to the barrio of East Austin at the corner of 1st Street, now

César Chávez St., and IH 35), became president of the board at LUCHA, and LUCHA's offices were housed at Juárez-Lincoln. I remember at the end of the first Festival Estudiantil Chicano de Arte y Literatura in about May, 1976, alurista, Juan Pablo and many of us who worked with the festival were having a debriefing session and towards the end of the meeting, alurista and Juan Pablo asked if there was anyone who was willing to take over and direct the festival the following year? No one raised their hand, so I volunteered to direct the festival and was accepted. I would direct the festival, along with a lot of the Trece Aliens and CASA camaradas, artists and poetas, for the next four years until 1980.

Besides being a full-time student in 1976, and working with barrio organizations in implementing Chicano arts programs and classes in the community with CASA and LUCHA, Devón Peña and I continued to play music with Larry Brannon or Alfredo Cruz on flute. Initially we called our group In Lak' Ech (Mayan for "you are my other self"). Devón played guitar and I was playing congas at the time and we were writing our own poetry and songs. Our music was more of an acoustic, Latin jazzy style and we played a few gigs at UT and other cultural events such as Floricanto III and the Chicano Film Festival in San Antonio. Little by little we began integrating other musicians like Devón's camaradas from Laredo, Bobby Ramírez on bass, his brother Kiko Ramírez on guitar, and Austinite Danny Mendoza on drums. When I told the bandmates that I played a little button accordion, they told me to bring up my two-row Hohner accordion from San Anto, which I did, and we added a Conjunto Tejano repertoire to our musical sets, playing polkitas, corridos, cumbias and some movimiento songs. By the end of 1976 and moving into 1977, as we integrated more of the accordion music into our band, we decided to change our name to the Conjunto Aztlan (see PP images # 3-4), bought ourselves a

sound system and began playing at movimiento events, dances, fundraisers in the barrio and at such clubs as Blondie's, The Royal Coach and Raul's on the drag. The Conjunto Tejano element with the accordion allowed us to reach a more traditional Raza audience, while at the same time exposing them to movimiento songs and our own original music. Our manager was Victor Guerra and inscribed on the first card that the Conjunto Aztlan printed was: "Música Chicana de todos los tiempos para toda la gente."

It was around this time that I met José Flores who, as I mentioned above, was an English professor at Juárez-Lincoln University, and a poet who was getting his doctorate at UT Austin. I think I met him through alurista at a poetry reading and class at his home. I soon found out that he played guitar and bajo sexto and had played with a conjunto, Los Originales, in his hometown of Laredo. We began playing some traditional Conjunto Tejano music together in the old style of just acordeón y bajo sexto.

Through CASA, many of us Trece Aliens organized a community creative writing course, much in the mold of alurista's course at UT. alurista had returned to California to work on a Ph.D. and left us to carry on the work in Austin. From this course, fifteen of us were included in a publication called *'Ta Cincho* (see PP image # 5) which was published by CASA in 1977. The editors of this publication were: David Cavazos, Raquel Elizondo, José Flores, Janis Palma, Inés Hernández Tovar, Pablo Torres, and myself. David and Raquel were already working with Angélica Martínez and *Tejidos*, an independent Chicano arts and literature publication based in Austin, and we began collaborating with them. In 1977, *Tejidos* put out a special issue of some of the winning selections of art and literature from the 2nd Annual Festival Estudiantil Chicano de Arte y Literatura (see PP images # 6-7). And in this same year, many of the CASA members

attended and performed our poetry and music at the 4th Festival Floricanto in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

In 1977, Raul Valdez began receiving federal CETA monies to hire full-time muralists and staff for LUCHA and was working with other individuals to officially incorporate as a non-profit 501 C-3 organization. CASA also began writing some grants to the City of Austin and Texas Commission on the Arts through LUCHA to help fund the Festival Estudiantil Chicano de Arte y Literatura.

1978: CASA, LUCHA, the Conjunto Aztlan and the Beginning of Xinachtli in Austin

1978 was a big year. I ended up splitting with my first Austin love and moved into the barrio in East Austin at a house on Robert Weaver, across the street from Metz Elementary. Many of us were still in school at UT trying to finish our Bachelor's degrees; others had graduated and moved on. CASA continued working with LUCHA to produce the 3rd Annual Festival Estudiantil Chicano de Arte y Literatura, as well as creative writing and other arts and music classes in the community. At the end of our community creative writing course this year, *Tejidos* published many of the participants in a publication titled *Arco Iris* (see PP image # 8). A pretty large contingent of the Trece Aliens and CASA members performed their poetry and music at the 2nd Annual Canto al Pueblo, a national Chicano arts and literary festival held in Corpus Christi, Texas, this year, including a showcase presentation with Atlantis (see PP image # 9).

Conjunto Aztlan was also going strong performing throughout the community at marchas, protests, bailes and fundraisers. A brief look through my 1978 calendar shows that we

were performing almost every weekend at clubs like Blondie's in East Austin, Raul's, and the Royal Coach; and at such barrio events as a Carne Guisada Cook-Off at Zaragoza Park, and the Feria de las Flores where we were recognized as the #1 band (see PP images # 10-19). We also traveled throughout the state for gigs in Laredo for a wedding, and Houston, where we performed at AAMA (Association for the Advancement of Mexican Americans), Centro Aztlan, and another time at a Chicano Studies Conference there. We had gigs at Texas A&I University in Kingsville, and in Waco. The Conjunto Aztlan was the first Conjunto Tejano to perform at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts when the Chicano and American Indian law students flew us up there; and we also performed that year at the 2nd Annual Canto al Pueblo, opening up for the great "Mago del Acordeón," Esteban Jordán, at Indio Danceland. Conjunto Aztlan was also the opening act for the Super-Baile Fiesta '78 at Fiesta Gardens which featured Little Joe y La Familia, Jimmy Edwards, The Latin Breed, and Flaco Jiménez y su Conjunto. What an honor it was to open up for these xingones and legends of Tejano Music (see PP image # 17).

Conjunto Aztlan performed at various community fundraisers that year, including one at the Royal Coach for the 19 Brown Berets and other people that were arrested at the Boat Races protest; for Los Campesinos de Tejas; and the "Ruiz V. Estelle" Prisoner's Rights Solidarity Committee benefit (see PP image # 19). Some of the Conjunto Aztlan members were still students at UT, including myself, and we were active in campus politics and would participate and perform at various campus protests and rallies.

In 1978, la Señora Salinas and the Ballet Folclórico Aztlán de Tejas, besides teaching Mexican folclórico dances, began offering and teaching traditional Mexica-Azteca Conchero dances at Juárez-Lincoln. José Flores and his wife, Sara, began doing Danza Azteca with her

group. José went with la Sra. Salinas to Mexico City this first year and met Andrés Segura, Capitán del Grupo Xinachtli, who would later become Capitán-General de la tradición de la Confederación de Danzantes Mexica-Azteca de los Concheros. I initially declined to be in the grupo de danza, but pulled by the camaradas and the allure of the mesmerizing Native drumbeats of the ceremonial danzas and the desire to connect with our Indigenous roots and spirituality, I eventually succumbed and began practicing with the group in preparation for a presentation on November 3rd in honor of the Virgen de Guadalupe at the Municipal Auditorium. I remember we worked hard the week before the presentation creating the designs and sewing our vestuarios, putting together our penachos with feathers and making the leather-strapped ayoyotes that went around our ankles. After we did our first danza at this celebration, we did another danza ceremonia on the real feast day of La Virgen de Guadalupe on December 12th at Santa Julia Church in East Austin.

By 1978, I changed my major again and was now in Education. I remember when I learned that the education system in this country was based on property values, and that public schools in the poor areas received a lot less money per student from the state than the rich schools did. This pissed me off, too. How could the poor schools and kids, primarily Chicanos and Blacks in Texas, get a good quality education and compete with the rich schools and students, when the funding was so unequal? Poor students start out at a tremendous disadvantage.

I wanted to teach Chicano Studies at the high school level, which I knew would help our students learn about their proud history and cultural identity and would help them succeed in school. But when I got to the last course I had to take, which had a student-teaching

component in an actual school, I was advised that I would not be able to get my BA degree in Education because it required a concentration in two certified teaching disciplines in the state. My two disciplines were English and Chicano Studies, and Chicano Studies was not a certified teaching discipline in Texas. Needless to say, I was disappointed, and when I spoke with Dr. Arnoldo Vento, who was the Director of the Center for Mexican American Studies at UT at that time, he advised me that I had more than enough credits to get my BA degree in Chicano Studies. I received this degree at the end of 1978. I think it ended up being classified by UT as a BA degree in Ethnic Studies which was administered by the Center for Mexican American Studies.

1979: Chalma, Xinchtl in Austin and LUCHA

In 1979, we continued a rigorous danza schedule in the first part of the year, rehearsing twice a week on Wednesdays and Sundays at the Juárez-Lincoln University auditorium building where LUCHA had their offices. Many movimiento camaradas from East Austin, both male and female, joined the grupo de danza and at some rehearsals I counted over 30 people that were in the circle dancing. José and Sara had taken on a leadership position within the group and we were preparing to attend our first ceremonia in Mexico for the Señor de Chalma/el Señor Tezcatlipoca, just southeast of la Gran Tenochtitlán (Mexico City). This ceremony was the cardinal point to the south in la tradición de los Concheros and an obligation for all danzantes. Chalma was held every year in May and it was the hardest and longest ceremony in the tradition; it lasted four days. All of the other ceremonies at cardinal points, La Virgen de Guadalupe/Tonantzin to the north, el Señor de Amecameca/Quetzalcoatl to the east, La Virgen de los Remedios/Mayaguel to the west, and el Señor Santiago Correo de los Cuatro Vientos in

the center, all lasted just one full day with a *velación* at night at their churches, plazas and temples, and *danzas* the next day. Equally as important as attending our first ceremony in México, was the fact that most of us that were going from the Austin group would be meeting Andrés Segura, Capitán de *Xinachtli*, for the first time and dancing with his grupo in Chalma. Little did we know that Andrés Segura would become our spiritual teacher and guide in la tradición de la danza until the day he died.

I continued working with CASA and LUCHA as we implemented the 4th Annual Festival Estudiantil Chicano de Arte y Literatura and worked in organizing classes, readings and performances in the community. An organizational brochure that LUCHA put out in 1978, cited statistics that the festival had reached over 14,000 students in the Austin Independent School District. The literary classes and Canto Libertarios del Barrio that we held at LUCHA, evolved into Canto Libre '79 (see PP images #'s 20-23), a series of eight readings and presentations by special guests that included Ángela De Hoyos, Dr. Juan Luna Cárdenas, Alfredo De la Torre, Paulita Huerta Garza, José Flores Peregrino, and special cantos with the CASA members and students from the 4th Annual Festival Estudiantil Chicano. The editors of *Tejidos*, Raquel Elizondo and David Cavazos, published another special edition that featured the art and literature of the students from the 4th Annual Festival Estudiantil Chicano de Arte y Literatura 1979 (see PP image # 24).

Raul Valdez's dream of a multidisciplinary Chicano arts and cultural center in East Austin had become a reality in LUCHA with programs and classes in the visual arts, literature, music, dance, and the murals program. By this time LUCHA had incorporated as a non-profit 501-C3 organization and was still being housed at Juárez-Lincoln University.

Conjunto Aztlan had also evolved as certain musicians came and went. We began to use José Flores on bajo sexto; and after a gig at Texas A&I University in Kingsville, we met Hector Chacón who came back up to Austin with us and began playing bass and guitar with the Conjunto Aztlan. Our repertoire was also changing to a more traditional Conjunto Tejano sound with button accordion and bajo sexto where we played polcas, valzes, huapangos and cumbias. In addition, influenced by the cantos de la danza and the Nueva Canción Movement from Latino América, we began using Indigenous instruments such as drums, flutes, caracol and sonajas, as well as the mandolin and 12-string guitar in some of our musical sets. This is when the Conjunto Aztlan moved into the second, more traditional, phase of the band and began to solidify our repertoire as a very distinctive Conjunto del Movimiento Xicano.

We were still writing our own original poetry and songs and integrating these into our performances. A couple of examples of the original songs we performed during our Indigenous set was “Guerra en el Alma” by José Flores Peregrino, and a song I wrote titled “Mestizo.”

Guerra en el Alma

Guerra, ya empezamos la revolución, la revolución

Guerra, ya empezamos la revolución, la revolución

En el alma ya empezamos la revolución

Miren, ya se mira la revolución, la revolución

Miren, ya se mira la revolución, la revolución

En el arte ya se mira la revolución

En el alma ya empezamos la revolución

Oigan, ya se oye la revolución, la revolución

Oigan, ya se oye la revolución, la revolución

En canciones ya se oye la revolución

En el arte ya se mira la revolución

En el alma ya empezamos la revolución

Vengan, ya se siente la liberación, la liberación

Vengan, ya se siente la liberación, la liberación

En el espíritu ya se siente la liberación

Guerra

Mestizo

Mestizo me puso mi madre

Mestizo voy a vivir

Mestizo me puso mi padre

Mestizo voy a morir

Mestizo voy a morir

Mi madre es la tierra

Mi padre es el sol

Mi madre es la India Americana

Mi padre el Español

Mi padre el Español

Nací en el barrio Chicano

Del Pueblo Chicano soy

Mestizo me puso mis padres

Y puro Chicano soy

Y pura Chicana soy

Y puro mestizo soy

A couple of songs that we wrote that were more in a traditional Conjunto Tejano style, but with movimiento lyrics, were José's waltz "Aquí No Hay Nada Profundo," and the polca ranchera "Vámonos a Pelear en la Guerra," which I wrote.

Aquí No Hay Nada Profundo

-Coro-

Aquí no hay nada profundo

Si no tienen sus raíces en la tierra

Todito en el mundo rueda

Si no tienen sus raíces en la tierra

Por su pedazo de tierra

El campesino pelea

Nomás para trabajarla

Y luego morir en ella

-Coro-

Por nuestros barrios de Aztlán

Las voces ya se levantan

Con sus almas enterradas

Hasta los poetas cantan

-Coro-

Las palabras del poeta

Vienen y van como el viento

Antes que se vuelen estas

Les dejo este pensamiento

-Coro-

Vámonos a Pelear en la Guerra

Vámonos a pelear en la guerra

Que esta tierra es de nosotros

Y como hermanos y hermanas

Por nuestros hijos lucharemos

Ya han matado muchos Chicanos

En los barrios de la vida

Peleando contra la injusticia

Los balazos de la policia

-Coro-

No llores corazón

No nos vamos a dejar

La semilla está bien sembrada

No nos pueden desenraizar

Mira la madre campesina

Pistolera de mi Aztlán

Por los derechos de nuestra Raza

Planta semillas de revolución

Vámonos a pelear en la guerra

Que esta tierra es de nosotros

Y por la liberación de la gente

Pa'l frente nos iremos

-Coro-

The Conjunto Aztlan, however, was much more than a traditional conjunto. We were experimenting with the fusion of different musical styles and instrumentation and we could just as easily break into a Latin Jazz or Blues number with accordion. At this time, we would usually end most of our gigs at such places as the Royal Coach and Raul's with the up-tempo Afro-Latino percussion call-and-response song that I wrote titled "Oye Tú, Indio" which was sure to get everyone off their seats and onto the dance floor.

Oye Tú, Indio

Oye tú, Indio quien te dijo que tú tenías sangre Negra

Oye tú, Indio quien te dijo que tú tenías sangre Negra

Oye tú, Indio quien te dijo que tú tenías sangre Negra

Me dijo mi mamá

Me dijo mi mamá

Me dijo mi mamá

Me dijo mi mamá

Ya mero güero, ya mero güero

Ya mero güero, ya mero güero

Se está acabando tu pinche pedo

Se está acabando tu pinche pedo

Toma el dedo, toma el dedo

La Raza Cósmica 'stá lista para 'cerlo, para 'cerlo

Para 'cerlo, para 'cerlo

Luchamos por libertad

Chicanos y Chicanas

Justicia y libertad

Justicia y libertad

En los barrios de Austin (this could change to whatever barrio or city we were in)

En los barrios de Aztlán

Luchamos por libertad

Chicanos y Chicanas

Nuestra tierra y libertad

Nuestra tierra y libertad

En los barrios de San Anto

En los barrios de Aztlán

I remember collaborating with some of the Brown Berets at el Centro Chicano who were also musicians and songwriters, such as Ernesto Fraga and Martín Delgado, in putting together a couple of Cancioneros del Movimiento Chicano that included corridos from the Mexican Revolution, original songs, Indigenous cantos and Chicano Movement songs, as well as songs from across the nation and Latino América. The Conjunto Aztlan continued performing at various movimiento events in East Austin and throughout the state including the Fiesta del Barrio and a Sandinista demonstration at the state capitol in Austin; the Association for the Advancement of Mexican Americans in Houston; a United Nations Conferencia in San Juan; the San Antonio Bilingual Theater Festival; Winter Fest and the Conferencia Plástica Chicana in Austin (see PP image # 25); as well as fundraisers for the Prisoner's Solidarity Committee, the Texas Farmworkers, *Caracol* magazine (see PP image # 26) in San Antonio, the Committee to Stop the Blockade in Cuba, and many other events.

One night, after performing at the Conferencia Plástica Chicana in Austin, many of the camaradas and guests from out of town that were at the conferencia came over to my house for an after-party. We were all having a good time drinking, smoking and singing outside my home when a police car pulled up into the parking lot in front of my house. A lone Chicano

officer stepped out of his vehicle and came over to where many of our friends and I were. Because I was the owner of the house, I stepped out to greet the officer and he told me that they had gotten a complaint for excessive noise. I explained the situation about the conference and that we had many guests from out of town. When the officer started to get a little demanding and belligerent, one of the carnales, David Pérez, who was living with me at the time, told the officer that he couldn't be coming to our home and talking to us like that. The officer jumped on David and attempted to arrest him. There was a crowd of about 15-20 people who had surrounded the officer and when he jumped on David, the crowd reacted in an attempt to pull the officer off of David, at which time the officer then pulled his gun out of his holster. People shouted, "The gun!," and they grabbed the officer's hand with the gun in it and began hitting the officer. I was concerned that the officer was going to fire his .357 magnum and kill someone. Friends wrestled the officer to the ground, punching and kicking him, and took away his gun. When we got the officer up and I told him that we didn't want for this to happen and that he could've killed someone, about five or six police car units arrived at my house and the officers began detaining and beating some of us in an attempt to arrest us. Many of the guests ran off, one with the officer's weapon. They ended up arresting three of us, David Pérez, Inés Hernández Tovar, and myself, and took us down to the police station. While at the station, the first Chicano officer who arrived at my house that night and caused all of this commotion and violence, took me up to an office where, even though I was handcuffed and other officers were present, he proceeded to choke me until I passed out. The *Austin American Statesman* headline the next day read: "Three Known Associates of the Brown Berets Arrested/Officer Loses Gun." All three of us were charged with assault on a police officer with a

deadly weapon, a felony. There were police brutality protests outside the police station the next day before we were released. They eventually found the officer's gun in the school yard that was across the street from my home. Later, the Conjunto Aztlan would play at a fundraiser for our defense committee and lawyers. It took us about two years to resolve these cases and ultimately the charges were reduced to resisting arrest misdemeanors for all three of us.

Later that year, that same Chicano officer who choked me, killed a young Chicanito by shooting him in the back of the head with a shotgun; supposedly he was fleeing from a robbery scene. The officer was no-billed and was not arrested nor suffered any repercussions for this killing, much less for my choking.

In May, '79, six of us from the Austin grupo de danza (José and Sara Flores, Bernardino Verástique, Inés Hernández Tovar, Eduardo Garza and myself), met Capitán Andrés Segura at his small apartment in la Gran Tenochtitlán/Mexico City, and after a day or two of preparation, we all took a bus to attend and participate in the four-day ceremonia in Chalma where we danced with el maestro Segura's grupo Xinachtli (see PP images # 27-31). It was at a group meeting with Segura that he named José Flores Jefe Primero del grupo Xinachtli in Austin, and myself, Jefe Segundo. José's wife, Sara, and Inés were named Jefas and Malinches of the group, and Bernardino was appointed Sargento. This first trip to Chalma with el Capitán Andrés Segura and Xinachtli had a profound impact on all of us who attended. I would attend this ceremonia at Chalma for the following six years in a row, as well as attending all of the other ceremonias de la danza in México at different times over the course of the next few years. At the end of October, '79, we attended the ceremonia and velación for Día de las Ánimas at Andrés Segura's oratorio in Mexico City, which is held every year on November 2nd; and on December 12th, we

attended our first ceremonia to la Virgen de Guadalupe/Tonantzin en su templo y basílica en la Gran Tenochtitlán.

In early 1980, I moved into a house in South Austin and continued working with CASA and LUCHA on producing and finalizing the program for the 5th Annual Festival Estudiantil Chicano de Arte y Literatura.

Conjunto Aztlan was performing a little more sporadically because we were going through some personnel and musical changes, yet we still opened the show for Inti-Illimani, one of the important Nueva Canción grupos de Latino América from Chile, at the University of Texas Bass Hall (see PP image # 32). We also did our regular gigs at the Fiesta del Barrio, a Texas Farmworkers' Fundraiser, Semana del Barrio, and we performed in San Antonio at the Universidad Autónoma de México along with the Mexican grupo La Nopalera.

In February, Andrés Segura came up to Austin and formalized the Austin grupo de danza as part of his grupo Xinachtli, which was under the Mesa de la Virgen de los Dolores, and reconfirmed the jefes and leadership he had appointed in Chalma. I believe that we were the first "official" traditional Mexica-Azteca Conchero dance group in Texas. We continued doing danza ceremonias in the barrio and practicing in preparation to attend the ceremonia del Señor de Chalma again at the end of May, after finishing up the Festival Estudiantil Chicano.

It was through la danza that we made connections with different individuals and Indigenous groups throughout the Americas, including people from the American Indian Movement like Philip Deere, Muscogee medicine man from Oklahoma (see PP image # 33), Juan Luna Cárdenas and Tlakaheel from Mexico, and danzantes from California, Tupak Enríquez,

Aztlekah, and Guillelmos "El Venado." Before we went to Chalma, many from Xinachtli in Austin attended, participated and performed at the 4th Canto al Pueblo in Mesa, Arizona in May, 1980, where there were Indigenous representatives from North, Central and South America. We did ceremonies with Leonard Crow Dog, Sioux medicine man, Thomas Banyaca, Hopi messenger, the Huicholes from Mexico, and many others. This was the first time that I heard of the union of the eagle and the condor, the union of the Indigenous people from throughout the continents of North and South America. We worked to strengthen these ties that bound us to each other, to the land, and to our movements (see PP image # 34).

The danza was important on different levels: Not only did it connect us, and the Chicano Movement, to our Indigenous/Mexican roots and culture, it connected us to our Indigenous spirituality. And even though we knew that many of us Chicanos in danza were not Mexica-Aztecas, it set us on the road to finding our true Indigenous raices. It also connected us to this land of Aztlan and Cemanahuak, and to each other as Xicanos/Mexicanos and Indigenous people across this continent (both north and south) in a powerful expression of Indigenous identity, decolonization, and creative resistance. Danza connected us to nuestra madre tierra, the cosmos, and the Creator/Great Spirit.

Upon my return from Chalma, I began my transition from Austin back to my hometown of Yanawana/San Antonio, Tejas. The only thing that changed, however, was my address because the work we were doing with danza and Xinachtli, the Conjunto Aztlan and different arts organizations, continued, both in Austin and now in San Antonio. Xinachtli began having rehearsals and doing ceremonias at the Misión San Francisco de la Espada in the deep southside of San Antonio. We alternated rehearsals between Austin and San Antonio. I moved

into a small brick house that was right next to the aqueduct that was built by los Indios and the colonizing españoles in the 1700s that fed water from the San Antonio River to the missions.

Fifty Years Later: The Impact of the Chicano Movement, Chicano/a Studies and the Xicana/o Cultural Renaissance on My Life's Work

As I am writing this today on Saturday, July 30, 2022, at my familia's home on the southside of Yanawana/San Antonio, Tejas, it has been almost 50 years to the day that I left my home to attend the University of Texas at Austin in August of 1972. As I look back on these last fifty years, hopefully with a little bit of wisdom that comes with hindsight, experience and age, I remember that period that I lived and worked in Austin from 1972-1980 as one with a lot of personal growth, transformational change, and positive creative energías. That period served as my training-ground where I gained experience that prepared me for my life's work in the Xicanx Arts and Xicanx Studies. It was a period of youth and passion and work and an intense commitment to our Raza, to the betterment of our barrios, and to the ideals of the Chicano Civil Rights Movement that included social and environmental justice, the right to self-determination, and the right to our land and liberación.

It was in Austin that I learned to love, and what service to our community means. It was at UT that I took my first Chicano History course and began learning about my own history and the history of our people, and where, ultimately, I ended up getting my BA degree in Chicano Studies. It was in Austin that I learned about the Chicano Movement and our almost 500 years of Indigenous resistance against the European colonizer and their racist and religious notions of White Supremacy. It was in Austin where I became a Chicano, a poet, musician, organizer, arts

administrator and danzante, and learned about the important role that the arts, artists, and the cultural arts institutions play for our people and communities. I learned the importance of working with individuals and organizations (CASA, LUCHA, the Brown Berets, AISD, el Centro Chicano, etc.), and the power of collective action and work. I learned how to organize a Chicano arts and literature festival, classes in the community and in the schools, fundraisers, poetry readings, musical events and ceremonias de danza. We learned so many things that would serve us throughout our lives. We learned how to publish our own books, write grants, deal with funding agencies like the City of Austin and the Texas Commission on the Arts, and how to work with the media (newspapers, magazines, radio, television, posters/flyers, press releases, etc.) to publicize our events. All of this work would serve me well as I embarked on the next phase of my life and returned to my hometown of Yanawana/San Antonio, Tejas.

Upon my return to San Antonio from Austin in the summer of 1980, I began hanging around with different camaradas, musicians and artists and found out that a coalition of Chicano arts organizations had written grants to the City of San Antonio and had received the first “serious” money for the Chicano arts in the city’s history. Hey, the city had been giving millions to the primarily gringo arts organizations like the symphony, ballet, museums, etc., but they had never given very much money to the Chicano Arts, even though Mexicanos/Chicanos comprised almost 70% of the population in San Antonio. It wasn’t until the threat of a lawsuit against the city, whereby the mayor and city council elections went from an at-large election system to a 10-1 single-member district plan in 1978, and where four Chicanos and one Black were elected to city council, that the politics changed and a road to a more equitable system of funding began to be implemented at all levels. Various Chicano Arts organizations and

programs received their first significant funding from the City of San Antonio in this 1979-80 fiscal year.

A poet friend called me up one morning and told me that a couple of these organization that had gotten funded by the city, PAN/Performance Artists Nucleus, Inc. (which would become the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center the following year when we moved into the Guadalupe Theater on the westside. See PP image # 35), and the San Antonio Consortium for the Hispanic Arts, were hiring a music director and that I should apply. I found out that they were hiring a Mariachi Project Director, and even though I was more of a Conjunto musician than a Mariachi, I applied because I knew that what they needed was an arts programs administrator that could set up a Mariachi project in our community, and I had gained arts administration and programming experience in Austin. In September, 1980, I was hired as their Mariachi Project Director. The following year I expanded the scope of the Mariachi Project to include all of Chicano Music, worked on the first Conjunto Festival, hired the great Valerio Longoria as the first Master Button Accordion Instructor, and changed the name of the program to the Xicano Music Program. I would direct the Xicano Music Program for the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center in San Antonio for eighteen years until I left the organization in 1998.

As part of my duties, I directed the Annual Tejano Conjunto Festival en San Antonio for seventeen years (see PP images # 36-37); implemented community-based music classes in Mariachi (guitar, violin, trumpet, vihuela, guitarrón), Conjunto (button accordion and bajo sexto), voice and Latin percussion; directed the Guadalupe's Performing Arts Series that brought to San Antonio many internationally renown performers such as Mercedes Sosa and Rubén Blades; edited many of the publications for the center, including the *GCAC Newsletter*

and *Tonantzin*, their quarterly magazine); worked on audio/video productions; wrote grants; worked on publicity for classes and events; and more.

During these first eighteen years we built the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center into one of the largest, most successful and important Chicano/a multi-disciplinary cultural arts organizations in the nation with programs, classes, exhibits, performances, special events, festivals, and directors in all of the arts disciplines: literature, music, visual arts, teatro, dance, and film/video. When I left the center in 1998, we had 24 full-time staff members (each with paid insurance and a matching annuity fund), an over \$2 million dollar operating budget, and a \$1 million dollar endowment fund. 42 years later, the Guadalupe still exists on the Westside of San Antonio. For more info on the history and programs of the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center, check out their website at guadalupeculturalarts.org.

After I left the Guadalupe, I went back to school and received my Masters degree in Bicultural Studies at University of Texas San Antonio at the end of 1999, then immediately was hired by UTSA to teach Mexican American Studies. I taught there for about two years and in 2002 I was hired by Palo Alto College (PAC), one of five colleges in the Alamo Community Colleges District in San Antonio, to create, direct and teach in a new Conjunto Music Program. In 2003 I was selected as the representative from the Alamo Community Colleges District to sit on the Mexican American Studies (MAS) Advisory Committee with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). This statewide advisory committee and THECB made MAS a Field of Study in Texas which allowed community colleges to offer an Associate of Arts degree in MAS for the first time in Texas history. Palo Alto College began offering courses and an AA degree in

MAS the first academic year that it was available in 2004-2005. Our Lady of the Lake University (OLLU) and UTSA already had MAS BA degree programs at this time.

Over the years, however, with lack of support, leadership, monies and promotion from the administrations and departments at various colleges and universities in San Antonio, the MAS courses and degree programs languished and our student enrollment was down at most institutions. A turning point came in 2012 when, two years after seeing how the very successful MAS high school program at the Tucson Unified School District in Arizona had been banned by their state legislature in 2010, and how there was a possibility that this could happen to our MAS programs in Texas, I got a call from a friend, Dr. Marie “Keta” Miranda from UTSA, who invited me to a meeting of MAS professors at Dr. Teresita Aguilar’s (a professor and administrator at OLLU) home to discuss our MAS programs. At subsequent meetings we invited Corina Gonzáles-Stout and June Pedraza from the MAS program at Northwest Vista College, Dr.’s Lilliana Patricia Saldaña, Josie Méndez-Negrete and Marco Cervantes from UTSA, Mariana Ornelas from Palo Alto College, Cynthia Cortez from St. Philip’s College, and others. The purpose of this loose collective of MAS professors was to strategize on what we needed to do, and how we could help each other out, to make our MAS programs successful at our respective institutions. We named this organization Somos MAS/Mexican American Studies, San Antonio, Tejas (see PP images # 38-40). In 2013 we established a Somos MAS student chapter at Palo Alto College.

Somos MAS led the charge in the rebounding of the MAS courses and programs at San Antonio academic institutions. We also realized that we had failed, to a great extent, in implementing Mexican American and other Ethnic Studies courses and programs for our young

children and students from grades Pre-K-12, and in 2014 we began to more actively work with the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS) Tejas Foco (chapter) and their Committee for MAS Pre-K-12. It was also in 2014 that we established the first Center for Mexican American Studies at Palo Alto College where I served as the Advisor-of-Record and coordinator (see PP images # 41-42); and where we planned and implemented the first Native American/Hispanic Heritage Month with a whole month's worth of academic and artistic presentations and performances (see PP images # 43-44).

In addition, in 2014 we began working with Texas State Board of Education members Rubén Cortez Jr. from the Río Grande Valley and Marisa Pérez from San Antonio, and a statewide coalition of Chicanx professors, educators, community activists and organizations, in advocating for a Mexican American History course for high school students. This would lead us to a four-year fight with the Texas State Board of Education that saw us protesting a racist MAS textbook seeking approval from the state board (it failed to get approval in a unanimous 15-0 vote); and implementing a very successful First Statewide Summit on Mexican American Studies for Texas Schools from Pre-K-12 in 2016 (six MAS Summits would follow (See PP image # 45).

I retired from Palo Alto College in 2016 but continued working with Somos MAS and NACCS Tejas in the fight for MAS. And when the history-making first MAS elective course for high school students was finally approved in 2018 by the Texas State Board of Education, and the majority Republican board changed the name of the course from Mexican American Studies to Ethnic Studies: An Overview of Americans of Mexican Descent, we coordinated a "Protest the Name Change" press conference that was held simultaneously in six Texas cities (Austin, San Antonio, Houston, El Paso, Fort Worth and San Juan. See PP image # 46). We protested and

testified at the subsequent state board meeting in Austin where a compromise agreement was finally reached and the approved course was called Ethnic Studies: Mexican American Studies (ESMAS). Es todo. Tanto political pedo and protests for one pinche Mexican American Studies course. The approval of this course in 2018 (see PP image # 47), which was the first high school Ethnic Studies course of any kind approved by the Texas State Board of Education in its history (and might be the first time in this nation's history that a MAS course has ever been approved by a state board of education), also paved the way for state board approval of other courses in African American Studies (approved in 2020), American Indian/Native Studies and Asian/Pacific Islander Studies (both of these courses are currently in the process of being implemented in 2022), and Latino Studies.

The Conjunto Aztlan went through some changes in the '80s and '90s when we added Eduardo Garza on drums, then later, Clemencia Zapata (drums/vocals) and my primo hermano Armando Tejada on bass. In later periods we integrated Eric Flores (José's son) and J.J. Barrera on bass (see PP images # 48-49). Throughout these last 42 years, I have continued to write and play music with both the Conjunto Aztlan and my primo Armando. In 1998 Conjunto Aztlan finally recorded its self-titled debut CD that featured pura música y poesía del Movimiento Chicano; and in 2005 we recorded our second CD, *From Aztlan with Love c/s aff*, all original love songs written by José Flores and myself (see PP image # 50). In 2018, Armando and I produced and recorded our first CD together, *Raíz XicanX* (see PP image # 51), that included an original Indigenous canto and corridos, traditional Conjunto Tejano, a cumbia Colombiana, blues, jazz and more. You can hear some of this music on my personal website at juantejada.net.

After I left the Guadalupe in '98, I continued to work with them in one capacity or another over the years. In 2006 they asked me to direct and coordinate the Tejano Conjunto Festival for them again, which I did on a part-time basis because I was still working full-time at Palo Alto College (see PP image # 52). I directed the festival for the next ten years during which time I produced eight *Best of the Tejano Conjunto Festival en San Antonio* CD's in a row, that were recorded live at the festival from 2008-2015. Since I retired in 2016, I have continued to serve as consultant and advisor to the festival and this year, in 2022, the Guadalupe celebrated the 40th Anniversary of the Tejano Conjunto Festival en San Antonio (see PP image # 53).

In 1986, after eight years of being the Jefe Segundo of Xinachtli in Austin/San Antonio and doing traditional ceremonial Mexica-Azteca Danza de los Concheros throughout Texas, parts of the U.S. and Mexico, I left the group. I needed to see the tradición from the outside, and I decided to focus my energías on my work at the Guadalupe and on my music and writing. I also wanted to research my family genealogy and search for my true Indigenous roots. I have been told that on my father's Tejeda-Martinez side, we have Coahuiltecan roots in Yanawana to the Pajalate and Payaya Indians. And I have come to find out that through my abuela Santa Martínez's lineage, we also have Tlaxcaltecan blood.

Interesting because when we first met maestro Andrés Segura over forty years ago, we were in his tiny Tenochtitlan apartment when he made reference to José being and looking bien Mexica. "¿Y yo, maestro?" le pregunté. He squinted his small Mexicano eyes as he looked at me intently for various seconds, then said: "Tu pareces Tlaxcalteca." I think I laughed a little and thought that he was fucking with me because the Tlaxcaltecas were the notorious enemies of the Mexica-Aztecas. I must've joked it off and didn't think about it too much. Years later I would

find out about the important role the Tlaxcaltecs played in the founding of the tradición de las Danza Mexica-Azteca de los Concheros. There's a verse in a canto de la danza, "Estrella del Oriente," for instance, that states:

Pueblito de Tlaxcala

Y no te puedo olvidar

Porque allí fue fundada

La Palabra General

So, you can imagine my surprise when almost 40 years later I came to find out that I had Tlaxcaltecan blood, también, running through my veins. El Capitán-General Segura was uncanny in his sabiduría like this, sometimes.

Xinachtli still exists and the Jefes José and Sara Flores, who have their oratorio at their home in Bastrop, were finally recibidos como Capitanes in 2020, and they continue to do danzas and ceremonias throughout Texas and sometimes in México. Occasionally I still join them for a special ceremony or velación.

In 2009, my wife, Anisa Onofre, and I decided to start Aztlan Libre Press (see PP image # 54), a small, independent, Xicana/o-owned press dedicated to the publication, promotion and free expression of Indigenous/Xicanx literature and art. For me, my publication experience came full-circle when, 34 years after the publication of *Trece Aliens* in alurista's UT Austin class, the first book Aztlan Libre Press published in 2010, was alurista's tenth book of poetry, *Tunaluna*. Since then, we have published 13 other books and 7 Xicanx Art Note Cards (see PP image # 55-56), including *A Crown for Gumeccindo* (2015) by former San Antonio and Texas Poet

Laureate Laurie Ann Guerrero, which won the 2016 Helen C. Smith Best Book of Poetry Award from the Texas Institute of Letters; *The Canción Cannibal Cabaret & Other Songs* (2019) by Amalia Ortiz, which won the 2020 American Book Award in Oral Literature from the Before Columbus Foundation; and our latest, *Writing 50 Years más o menos Amongst the Gringos* (2020) by award-winning journalist and academic, Dr. Cintli. We are currently finalizing the publication of our first novel, *La Quinta Soledad*, by 82-year-old award-winning playwright and writer from Tucson, Arizona, Silviana Wood. The novel should be out in November, 2022. For more information on Aztlan Libre Press and all of our publications, check out our website at aztlanlibrepress.com.

Final Reflection

For me, two of the greatest legacies of the Chicano Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and '70s are: Chicano/a/x Studies, also referred to as Mexican American Studies; and the establishment of Chicano cultural arts organizations and institutions in our communities throughout Aztlan.

Xicanx Studies programs at colleges and universities across the nation have given us 50+ years of scholarship, research, and publications in multiple disciplines related to the Indigenous/Xicanx/Mexicanx people and experience: history, literature, language, government/politics, sociology/psychology, education and the arts (visual, music, dance, drama and film/video), among others. More importantly, however, I feel that the teaching of Xicanx Studies to our youth and students at all levels of the educational ladder, and preparing our future teachers and leaders, has been its greatest contribution. You can get an Associate of Arts

degree in Mexican American Studies at certain community colleges in Texas now, and there are Bachelor of Arts and Masters degrees in Chicax Studies offered at universities throughout this country, even some Ph.D programs.

And while throughout our history as the Indigenous/Mexican people within the U.S., there have been some examples of good Raza teachers and others that have integrated Xicanx and other Ethnic Studies programs, courses and literature into the classrooms of students from Pre-K-12th grade, for the most part our history, culture and people, as well as that of other People of Color (Native American Indian, African American, Asian Americans and others), have been erased and excluded from U.S. schools, curriculum and textbooks. U.S. schools still teach our students, who have increasingly become students of color, from a very racist and privileged White supremacist perspective. And still, the great majority of school administrators and teachers are White. This has to change if we expect to live up to the ideals of a true justice, equality, and liberty for all. Every child and student in this country deserves, and has the right to, a good, quality education that will prepare them to succeed in school and life in this diverse, multinational and multicultural global society we live in.

While Xicanx Studies is one of the most important legacies of the Chicano Movement, one of the biggest mistakes that the Chicano Movement and Xicanx Studies made was that most of its programs and courses were focused at the college/university level, and it didn't concentrate nearly enough in implementing Ethnic Studies programs in schools, classrooms, curriculum and textbooks from Pre-K-12th grades. How many Chicano and Black students have we lost over these last 50 years that have dropped out before they graduated from high school? How many Xicanx and African American students have we lost to the school-to-prison

pipeline? How many of our young and vulnerable children and students could we have saved over the last 50 years if we had Ethnic Studies programs and diverse administrators and teachers in our public schools?

Studies have shown that students, regardless of ethnicity, who take Mexican American and other Ethnic Studies courses, graduate from high school at higher rates, score higher on standardized tests, and are overall more engaged and successful in their academic courses and school in general. If we know this, why aren't administrators, educators, and legislators in this country not doing everything in their power to implement Ethnic Studies in the school's curriculum and textbooks at all levels? Do we not want our children to succeed?

Over the last ten years there has been some success in Texas, California, New Mexico and a few other states, in implementing Ethnic Studies in schools from Pre-K-12, but there has not been nearly enough. Instead, there seems to be a conservative backlash to the gains of the Ethnic Studies Movement, and the Texas Republican governor and legislature (as well as other state legislatures throughout the country), for instance, have now enacted laws that, in effect, ban the teaching of race and other issues that might make certain students "uncomfortable." They have even begun banning and eliminating certain books (mainly those dealing with race, People of Color and LGBTQI+ issues) from school courses and libraries (*The 1619 Project* is a good example of this).

In the face of this onslaught, the Ethnic Studies Movement across the nation must get more organized and redouble its efforts to implement Ethnic Studies programs and courses from Pre-K-12, and at colleges and universities throughout this nation. This is crucial for the

success of all of our children and students. We must hold this nation and the states' educational systems accountable. In Texas, for instance, over 70% of the approximately 5.4 million public school students, Pre-K-12, are People of Color, with over half, about 53%, being Chicana/Latina, and almost 13% African American. The schools need to teach a true history of this diverse nation, one that accurately represents the diverse student population they are trying to teach. That means including Ethnic Studies in all subject matter, curriculum, textbooks and other instructional materials. That also includes hiring People of Color at all levels, from administrators to teachers, and electing school board members that truly represent all of the people in their community.

At the same time, we must continue to create and support our own Indigenous/Chicana educational and cultural organizations and institutions in our communities that teach our history, culture and the arts. Which brings me to what I think is another one of the most important legacies of the Chicano Movement: the establishment of Indigenous/Chicana cultural arts and educational organizations and institutions in our communities throughout Aztlan.

As a result of, and in tandem with, the Chicano Civil Rights Movement of the '60s and '70s, there was an explosion of creativity and a flowering of the Chicano/a arts, artists, and arts organizations in our barrios across the nation in a brilliant display of creative resistance that became known as the Chicano Cultural Renaissance. There were loose artist collectives, like the Royal Chicano Air Force and Los 4 in Califas, and organizations like CASA/Chicanos Artistas Sirviendo a Aztlan and LUChA/League of United Chicano Artists in Austin. There were theater troupes like El Teatro Campesino in California, and Teatro del Barrio in Tejas. And there were organizations and programs that would become some of the premiere Chicano cultural arts

organizations in the nation and serve as models, such as Centro Cultural De la Raza in San Diego and Plaza de la Raza in Los Angeles, the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center and the Esperanza Peace & Justice Center in San Antonio, and the Mexic-Arte Museum and Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center in Austin.

And all across the cities and towns in this country there were Chicano and Chicana working artists creating their own art, while at the same time working as administrators with community activists and organizers to form these organizations, some that ceased to exist over the years, and some that have survived till today some 40 and 50 years later. These artists and organizations created murals on barrio walls, organized exhibits and poetry readings, musical presentations and festivals, and dance and theater productions and performances. They developed spaces and publications where we could tell our own stories in our own languages. Stories that the schools weren't telling us. And these Chicana/o artists and organizations taught classes in the community for people of all ages: in painting, literature, theater, music, film/video, and Chicanx culture and history. Chicanx Studies and arts classes that the schools weren't teaching us.

And let us not forget how these Chicanx artists and organizations have collaborated with the schools. They've facilitated numerous in-school presentations and workshops and provided materials and publications for students and teachers, and created and presented exhibits, murals, performances, etc., for school and classroom field trips. Indeed, these Chicanx cultural arts organizations and institutions have provided Xicanx Studies and arts services and programs in our community that the schools weren't providing, and they have played a key role in the

preservation and teaching of our history, language, culture, traditions and art forms, which has often has gone overlooked and underappreciated.

In the process, and over the years, these Xicanx cultural arts organizations and institutions in communities and barrios throughout Aztlan have become keepers of the historical memory and archives of our people, and powerful sources of creative resistance, cultural/artistic expressions, Indigenous/ Xicanx cultural identity, and empowerment.

I'm a firm believer in the power of Xicanx/Ethnic Studies and the Arts in healing the trauma of racism and the injustices of colonization, and to help mitigate the violence of racial hatred and war. Como dijo Benito Juárez, the first Indigenous President of México: "Entre individuos como entre naciones, respeto al derecho ajeno es la paz" (Among individuals, as among nations, respect for the rights of others is peace). Through Ethnic Studies and the arts, we can learn about the beauty of other peoples' countries, cultures, languages and religions. We can learn how to communicate and respect each other, and hopefully move away from war, and towards a true justice, liberation and peace for all.

I know that we have a long way to go, and that we will surely die in this struggle before we get there. But for us, la liberación está en la lucha, and in doing what we can and working every day with our Raza and communities and organizations for a better and more just world for our mother earth, and for all of our children and their children's children, for generations to come.

I write this today, not to brag or boast, though I am proud of the work we've done over the years, but to simply document this work for history, so that we don't forget. Because if we

didn't have flyers and posters and photos, if we didn't write things down in our annual calendars and in our papers and publications, who would remember? Who would remember that there were poets, musicians, danzantes, artists, administrators and organizations like CASA and LUCHA in Austin during the '70s that did some amazing and important work in our communities and for our Raza? Who would know that these artists and organizations were the precursors to those Chicanx cultural arts organizations that still exist in our barrios today and continue doing this crucial work?

I write this in the spirit of el carnal raulrsalinas, "El Tapón" Autumn Sun pinto poeta XicanIndio de East Austin, who, in his poem "About Invasion and Conquest," wrote: "'Who will live to tell of what happened to us, Grandmother?' a young Mexica asked. La Anciana responds: 'Among the survivors there will be poets, they will relate that which happened to us.'"

And in the spirit of In Tlilli in Tlapalli and In Xochitl in Kuikatl, we leave at least these flowers, we leave at least these songs. (See PP images # 57-58)

To all our relations/Tewahayo nah'o k'tu. Desde the unceded territories of Yanawana, land of the Payayas, we thank you Creator/Great Spirit. H'o Kammtuyahamm.