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## Que Tal: An Anthology of Student Writings

Mexican American Graduate Studies, San Jose State University

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**AN ANTHOLOGY  
OF STUDENT  
WRITINGS**

**Que  
Tal**

Edited by  
DR. SYLVIA GONZALES  
SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY

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MA 165 S X425

QUE TAL

AN ANTHOLOGY OF  
STUDENT WRITINGS

Special Edition

Copyright September 1975

Edited by Dr. Sylvia Gonzales  
Mexican American Graduate Studies  
San Jose State University

Art by Jose Antonio Burciaga

## DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the future and all that these students wish and are able to become.

Do poor or minority students respond to the opportunity to become better educated? Can these young people from the fields and barrios described so dramatically in their writings, produce competent and creative academic work? Is the opportunity really worth offering these individuals?

This edition of Que Tal is proud testimony to the importance of opportunity. Without the assistance provided by the Economic Opportunity Program, Mini Corps and other ethnically-oriented academic programs such as those offered by the Mexican American Graduate Studies Department of this University, this publication would not have evolved.

Read these students' writings with a critical eye. They are but an example of what students in these opportunity programs can do when given encouragement and assistance. Surely, this publication is excellent evidence that the opportunity to go to college is worth offering.

This essay is written for all the students in my creative writing class with whom I have had the pleasure of sharing experiences, and for all readers of Que Tal. I hope that these words serve as encouragement and inspiration for their writing endeavors in the future.

#### WHY PUBLISH?

We cannot teach people to be writers, we can only encourage people to write. And thus begins the creative process.

We are all poets, we are all philosophers, we are all creators of our own fiction. The poem, the novel, the creative essay are all products of our inner selves coping, surviving, interpreting and reacting to our environment. Our daily lives are a struggle. The struggle is one of finding ourselves in relation to the environment which surrounds, engulfs, challenges and which may eventually devour us if we allow it. This struggle, contrary to what we may think, is not a solitary one. It is one which commands days and nights of even the most insignificant of creatures. As human beings of mind, heart and soul, we demand that this struggle go beyond that of providing the basic necessities for survival. And then, the struggle becomes a crisis. We move from crisis, conflict and pain to revelation, resolution and finally, momentary peace.

Such is the life of a poem, a novel, a song, a film, a painting. It is proof of the struggle, documentation of a battle fought and won. It is a record of life, of human existence. It is the human being reaching out with mind, heart and soul and recording their potential beyond mere survival. And we readers are the benefactors, the recipients of the lessons of the struggle. We see, we hear, we feel and we know we are not alone. We interpret a poem. We walk into its metaphors, rhythm and rhyme of pain and joy, climaxing in discovery. We share the struggle. We become that poem. We travel to the depths of its struggle and suffer its crisis only to surface with it in greater peace and understanding in order to learn, borrow and incorporate it into our own struggle. This is the space of a creative work. This is the space which has been established between protagonist and lector, idea and intellect, experience and propagator. Space and time cease because they become continuous. They lose themselves within the sharing process between creator and perceiver.

Therefore, we must create! We must sing, paint and write. That is the only form of true sharing. It is in the greatest spirit of brother and sisterhood, that I urge all young men and women to write and publish, write and read, write and share and most important, to write and write and write.

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QUE TAL

San Jose State University  
San Jose, California

Que Tal first appeared on the San Jose campus four years ago. It was started by a group of Chicano students who feel that there is a need to introduce and examine literature written by Chicano students. Que Tal was organized to serve that purpose. In addition, Que Tal acts as a line of communication between students, Chicano faculty and the Chicano community in San Jose.

Students who organized Que Tal have volunteered their services in writing, printing and drawing. They meet in basements, garages and at each others' homes in order to produce the publication and present the much untapped writing talents of the Chicano student population. Administrative support has now made it possible for students to receive from one to six units credit for working on the Que Tal staff.

Commitment of students has been the deciding element with Que Tal. Giving up studying time, staying up late at night typing, proofreading, editing, hustling paper, asking for donations and contributing of their own funds to buy materials have made Que Tal possible. These commitments have been the force behind Que Tal's survival over the years.

Que Tal offers students the opportunity to expand and expose to others, their writing creativity simply by joining the staff. It gives students experience in writing, proofreading, magazine layout, editing, writing, etc. In order to receive unit credit, students must have signed up for Que Tal within the first two weeks of the semester. However, participation in Que Tal is now being made available to students in the MAGS 165 Creative Writing class which has been expanded to include a publications laboratory for producing and publishing of Que Tal.

The Staff of Que Tal

Managing Editor.....John A. Torres  
Editor.....John Luna  
Secretary.....Bertha Galvan  
Treasurer.....Ricardo Salinas  
Distribution.....Jose Montes de Oca

Mailing Address:

Mexican American Graduate Studies  
San Jose State University  
San Jose, California

## INTRODUCTION

This publication was originally meant to be a special edition of Que Tal, a literary publication for and by Chicano students at San Jose State University. The idea was to collect creative prose and poetry from campus Chicanos and in particular, students in the MAGS 165 Creative Writing class. With this special edition it was hoped that enough money would be accrued to start a monthly publishing effort of Que Tal. However, examination of materials have now given us an expanded purpose.

While selecting material for this special edition, I made an enlightening, interesting and what I hope to be a beneficial discovery. I found that Chicano students in the creative process could not isolate themselves from their environment or their experiences as is true with most authors. And, because of the unique psychological, sociological, political and economical atmosphere in which Chicanos find themselves in this country, their writing is especially dramatic, sensitive, oftentimes hostile and violent, colored with cultural characteristics and colloquialisms, and most important, pure and honest. These students write about their life, thoughts, experiences and desires as they see them. They have had enough of academia to want to express themselves in writing and not enough to distort the reality through propositions and suppositions, laboratory solutions and conclusions. For this reason, I not only selected creative prose and poetry for publication, but also commentaries and research essays on subjects that indicate student concerns, interpretation of events and attitudes. We will find that what these students chose to write about, are subjects that have meaning in their past, their future and their contemporary environment. Sometimes the theme is not so clear, so we have to explore deeper in order that the writers true concern may surface. How often do we have to explore deeper into our own actions to understand their true nature and motivation?

These students offer us a unique opportunity by way of this publication. Although literary critics may show disapproval or find fault with some of the selections in this book, we have not meant this special edition to be solely a literary masterpiece. We are offering its special insights, cultural portraits, honesty and literary naivete as a guide into the Chicano experience.

I urge professional psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, educators and all others that have either the need or a desire to understand and learn about the minority, ethnic experience in the United States, to take the time to read this book with concern and sensitivity.





### On Being Chicano

Almost everything the individual sees is reflected through the lenses of his home and environment. Therefore, it is hard for the students to express their views on any topic, or search into themselves for their meaning, without looking into the meaning of being Chicano. Some stated it very simply, "it is a matter of pride and identity". Others were as confused as their parents as to what to call themselves, Chicano, Mejicano, Mexican American. Yet, they seem less uncomfortable with that small confusion than the older generation. And then, there were those who presented, analyzed and advocated a politics of "Chicanismo". In their enthusiasm and ambition, they look with pessimism on the past and with hope to the future.

Straining my eyes  
cause I must  
write.  
No light,  
Only the brightness of my mind  
which moves my pen.  
Mi corazon no para de sentir  
hablo con mis ojos  
beso con me alma.  
Soy de una rica mezcla  
de sangre.  
Mi piel como chocolate  
rica y dulce.  
Mis ojos suaves y color cafe  
porque soy de una rica mezcla.  
I see el sol chupando la sangre de mi Papi  
it turns his skin of moreno to prieto.  
Pelea la vida  
para darnos vida.  
He is man  
man of will to live  
and faith to survive.  
His shoulders are no longer broad  
instead they sag with impatience of life  
as a man,  
a man hecho y derecho.  
My idioma is pocho  
because two languages  
are part of my life.  
I can dance to a corrido  
and move with rhythm to Santana.  
I don't know what Thanksgiving day is  
I just know we eat turkey on that day  
and for crismas we eat tamales.  
I don't believe in woman's lib,  
but I still like to treat  
carnales to un lonche.  
Everything is silencio  
aqui en mi chosa.  
I see before me  
a plate de frijoles sprindled with salt,  
the grains of salt  
are like the number of  
thoughts running  
through mi mente.

Teresa Santiago

I was born in America, as the white people  
call it,  
so I am a Mexican American.  
I am a citizen of the United States,  
of Mexican descent.  
But I consider myself a Mejjicana.  
Mexicans are born in Mexico  
and I was not.  
Yet, I consider myself one.  
I was born in Aztlan  
which was once Mexico's land  
and the land of my forefathers.  
The Aztecs were the nomads  
which traveled this land.  
They finally settled in central Mexico.  
Even though this land was taken from Mexico,  
our blood is still here.  
I'm a Mexican because of my blood.  
But above all, I'm a Mexican  
because I believe this land is still Mexico's.

A Mejjicana is not one because  
she was born in Mexico,  
but because she believes she is one.  
I'm Mejjicana because my "corazon"  
feels like being one  
and because I believe I am Mexican.

Rosa Mendoza

I am a not supposed to  
that has, can and will...  
I am a growing, unforeseen success  
competing to be the best.  
I am an unsatisfied self,  
with a never-ending appetite for knowledge  
in a white world unwilling to give.  
I am desire with deep pride,  
an aztec warrior who has cried.  
I am respect demanding the same,  
no longer a brown face with shame.  
I am the sun, moon and earth,  
I am the entire universe.  
I am knowledge continuing to learn.  
I am experience continuing to teach.  
If I do not know, I shall learn.  
If I am not, I shall be.

John Torres

I am a citizen of the universe  
who was born in the United States of America.  
As Oscar Zeta Acosta says,  
I am a "Brown Buffalo"  
which roams the lands of the Southwest,  
our own lands...  
and am called a foreigner.  
I am not recognized by my people  
in the mother country,  
nor by the people where I was born.  
I am a person who served my country  
in peace and in war and yet,  
I am rejected by her.  
I am an individual in search of an identity  
hoping to fit into society  
and at the same time hoping,  
to find myself.  
"Yo soy quien soy y no me parezco a nadie".  
I am myself and I don't want to be anyone else.

Victor Garza

Who I Am...

I am a Chicana and whatever I apply myself  
to be.  
I play many different roles in today's  
society,  
but one role I play consistently,  
is my interself.  
In any role I have, such as student,  
sister, aunt and daughter;  
I still have color of eyes, skin and  
receding cheekbones.  
Last but not least, I have my pride  
in being what I am,  
"Yo soy Chicana"!

Geneva Fernandez

## What Raza Means to Me

Viva la Raza, Viva la Causa...

Oh, what beautiful, mystifying and unique cries, my raza has created in order to endure.

Injustices, dehumanization and the cultural losses of a mentally and genetically conquered people. And the cries...

They provide me with the strength to refuse defeat or deny my original genetic origins.

Cries which are shouted out from the youngest to the oldest members of my raza with such unparalleled dignity that their strength and true meaning can only be grasped by those who are, true descendants of our Aztec forefathers.

Only we can relate and identify with the power and passion, provided by such an unique language.

A language so unequalled in its quest for survival that it has challenged all attempts at suppression and modification and has, for decades...

provided a unifying entity for its children.

The children of la raza acknowledge our language, pay it high tribute by using it as vehicle for uniting in harmony, under their true surname...

Raza!

This surname, provides its bearer with such mythical magnetism, that few dare to alienate themselves from its source.

Raza...

Such a distinct and universal concept that its members, although individual in their own right, stand alone in pride, respect and profound dignity. So much so, that their alliance as a people creates unprecedented strength and unity.

It is this strength that does not allow Raza to submit to defeat, but rather, it encourages us to continue to reinforce our existence as a people... A people which refuses to be conquered.

Strength such as this is what Raza means to me...

John Torres

## WHO AM I

An essay by Anita Molina

Four years ago I was introduced to a completely different way of life, campus life. A life where one's mind is supposedly broadened and opened for the first time, a place where my cultural morals and values were challenged by the gabachos carefree, loose way of living. I have come from many directions within these four years and the question of who I am is pounding harder and harder in my head.

My search to find myself has put me through many changes and the position in which I began my search has faded, leaving only memories of the way I was.

In seven semesters I have learned more from people than from any book I've read. I've seen a system where only the "qualified" survive. I've learned the differences between friendships and acquaintances, but more important, I've learned some things about myself.

### Who Am I?

I am the daughter of proud Mexican parents who have taught me to say "mande usted", and to feel within my heart the beauty of mariachi music, the beauty of our culture.

I am the student trying to better myself so that my children won't spend half their lives working in the fields beside me.

I am la Chicana feeling the pain of our people in our struggle for unity.

I am the person longing for independence and fighting for my right to be an individual.

I am all of these, yet my search for identity continues.

Anita Molina

Who Am I?

I am the wild coyote  
that has not been tamed  
or cares to be.

I am like the wind  
in the mountains  
in the deserts  
in the plains.

I am like the clouds  
that are free up above  
and move over oceans  
continents and islands.

I am like the water  
in the rivers  
in the brooks  
in the seas.

I am like the rainbow  
like the stars at night  
like the fluttering butterfly.

Like the sun  
and the moon  
and the heavens  
and the earth,

I am he who lives  
and dies  
and loves  
and cries.

I am the old  
I am the young  
I am the weak  
I am the strong.

I am the descendent  
of the Toltecs  
of the Mayas  
of the Aztecs.

I am the son  
of Quetzalcoatl.  
I am the revolution,  
I am the movement.

I am an Indian  
I am a Spaniard.  
I am a mestizo,  
and finally, I am Chicano.

Ricardo Salinas

He takes off his hat and  
sits and remembers of the  
life he dreamed.  
His back is tired and he  
can still feel the heat crying  
down his body.  
He often tells me of the time  
they took him away in a  
cage like an animal.  
Poor papa the price he paid  
for trying to become  
part of the land of opportunity.  
But he was always a little bit  
slower than "los otros".  
He was always one box behind.

Daniel Pimentel

And they steal his dreams  
because he will only have  
a fourth grade education.  
He will sit in the barrio  
with his plate of beans and  
watch the gringos grow.  
A little brown boy sits in his  
corner made up of people.  
He is bewildered.  
Living in his own mind.  
He will learn of right.  
He will learn of wrong.  
He will learn of life.  
And very soon, a little brown  
boy will revolt.

Daniel Pimentel

Smiling on a rainy day  
waiting for the smile  
to be real...

A dream for life  
A search for tomorrow  
wondering when tomorrow  
may arrive..to find out  
death may await...

Daniel Pimentel

Just one more box.  
One more field.  
Seasons started,  
Seasons over.  
Just three more days.  
Endless time of struggles and  
working with the sun shining  
on our backs.  
Just one more  
ray of sun so  
I can see it shine  
this time.

Daniel Pimentel

#### The Chicana

The time has come  
because she says  
she must be heard.  
Her beautiful, black hair  
wants to tangle its way  
en la vida and  
fight for la raza.  
The Chicana with her  
beautiful brown eyes  
is busy watching and  
busy saying...  
the Chicana is here!  
Political scandals burn the  
cloth from our pockets  
and she helps med it back  
with her pride.  
The time has come  
for the Chicana to scream,  
to speak, to be heard.

Daniel Pimentel



I am a chicano searching for the thoughts of my soul to guide me through the myth of reality and the conscious of my mind. Let it be the reality of living or dying. I am a chicano searching for myself and the identity that has been prejudiced by a society of impressions and concepts of my soul, my life and my culture. I am an educator of my being, engrossed in a struggle for meaning. I am a Chicano.

Jose Villanueva Jr.

#### Who Am I?

Many times I have seen my image in a mirror.  
I have grown so accustomed to my face,  
that I cannot mistake my face for any other face.  
But...  
if someone were to ask me who I am,  
I will do more than just tell him what I see  
in the mirror.

I am one who has been deprived of opportunities  
because of my color and my language.  
I am one who has been struggling all my life.  
I am one who has been oppressed by society too long.  
I am a product of a life-shaping mold,  
a mold sculptured of indifference and misunderstandings.

I, as well as many others,  
will emerge from this life-shaping mold.  
We will feel the fresh air,  
filling our lungs to capacity  
with pride of who we are.

I am a brother of the universe,  
and a Chicano to you.

Oscar Gallardo

## A REPORT ON LA RAZA\*

by

Esteban Hernandez

### Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to present a Chicano viewpoint of the social condition of nuestra raza. Through it, I would like to look at the problems of la raza unida and my reactions to them. I am focusing on the San Jose community and my ideas are a reflection of three years active experience en esta comunidad. El Movimiento currently appears to have been institutionalized, and by this I am referring to the role of raza in higher education, government, media, etc. Although we still lack adequate representation in these institutions, our representation is increasing. This is happening in spite of the restrictive definitions of bureaucracy. It still remains to be seen just how many of us will be allowed within the bureaucratic administrative structure and whether through this vehicle we can achieve vital change. Grassroots activity regarding El Movimiento is fairly active and provides added impetus for change by raza within the institutions. However, the gap between the institutions and community remains large.

\*Editor's note: This report is presented as a case study of one Chicano community. I believe it provides insight into the Chicano political and social condition, although organization names and activities are peculiar to San Jose.

The Mexican, Mexican-American, Chicano community of San Jose, California, offers variations in class, mentality and nationalistic sentiments. Muchos mexicanos see the United States as a land of opportunity where hard work and sacrifice bring a good life. Yet, a main obstacle to the upward mobility and equality of the raza lies within their immediate environment.

For instance, the farmworkers attempt to make the United Farmworkers Union a reality have been frustrated by the power of the Teamsters Union of which many raza are members. In effect, raza dues are used to stifle a cause which affects the majority of raza. Yet, by belonging to the Teamsters, these dues-paying members are enjoying a style of life better than they had in Mexico and with which many Mexicanos strongly identify. "Social Injustice" is largely irrelevant to them. It wasn't so long ago that leaving the fields to work in a cannery was seen as a step up the ladder for them. In reality it is, but a politicized Chicano tends to seek safer, more humane working conditions and resents the relegation of his people to the hardest, filthiest jobs. This has been illustrated here in San Jose by the efforts of Chicanos striking at Del Monte within the last two years. A gabacho striker spoke of how the Mexicans had the "shit" jobs, los chicanos the hard labor jobs and the gabachos the best jobs. This is a reflection of the distinctions made between the Mexican and the Chicano. The gabacho employer sees this and uses all Raza. The Mexicans are "making it" working at the lowest levels and the Chicanos are slightly above them but also limited.

A sizable percentage of older as well as younger Raza are not politicized and thus are self-centered. Raza at all levels realize that they are of Mexican origin but many Chicanos belittle the word Mexican and consider themselves superior to their counterparts that speak fluent Spanish. I see this as the most visible force separating us. There is hostility between the so-called "wet backs" and "los batos locos", Chicanos which are born or raised here. Wet-backs are referred to those of Mexican custom as compared to the average Eastsider Chicano. Because San Jose has a strong Mexican history/culture, Mexican custom is quite evident with both groups but is nonetheless relegated to second-class status due to Anglo social control and factionalism amongst Raza.

The mere number of Raza in San Jose and its consequences of social injustice and striking visibility of brown faces causes a multitude of community problems. Some of the more pressing problems are lack of political power which results in abundant drugs, police harassment, inferior education, disunity, etc. A number of elite, concerned-community members have acted on these problems with varied success and failure. Community agencies such as La Confederacion de la Raza Unida del Condado de Santa Clara, which encompasses various smaller Chicano organizations such as Los Veteranos de la Revolucion, Los Monitors, and student organizations, seek to be the spokesman for the community. And in a sense, la Confederacion is a grass roots organization. Few professionals are directly active in it. Its members are busy and pursue their particular course of action. The meetings rarely draw large representation from the various organizations. A volunteer organization, a few individuals tend to dominate its actions. These members have generally been long time associates and work closely with each other. New active members are few and I feel that its structure is a reason of this. I believe that it does have fair to good credibility within the community.

MACSA (Mexican American Community Service Agency) is another community organization and its board is composed largely of professionals. There has been ego-tripping in the past which seems to be one of their faults. MACSA has also suffered from a lack of credibility due to misunderstanding and distrust of professionals from the community. MACSA does elevate the struggle to a level of professionalism attained by those in power. No organization is perfect but good does come from each of them and the community would benefit by participating in them. I have worked within each organization and feel that they are necessary and do accomplish much. However, the variety of organizations is a reflection of the diversity and division within the community of the means the community uses to make itself heard. Closer communication and action is necessary to unite the various factions. This can come about through impartial community people rather than the egotistical individuals presently involved within both kinds of organizations. The latter need to be brought back to reality.

An example of progressive action occurring in San Jose, is an organization called Los Monitors which provides security for Raza events. This represents the beginning of community control over police. Central Chicano Student Union

is another example and aims at developing organization, leadership and increased social awareness among Chicanos in high school.

A prime obstacle towards "a raza unida" is a contempt for raza not from San Jose. Machismo and roudiness among Chicanos oftentimes cause them to kill and fight one another rather than unite. Another reason for disunity are drugs which commonly creep into our lifestyle. They create a vicious circle which has yet to be broken. When under the influence of drugs, respect disappears and carnalismo becomes "puro pedo". Actually carnalismo often disappears into an unknown word.

Perhaps the answer to our problems lies in an ability to govern ourselves. This necessitates our absorption and input into the political system. However, the feasibility of this appears limited. In the case of Chicano political candidates, support would first have to come from our own. Sensitizing the gabachos is also necessary as this would allow for the freedom to pursue our course of self-determination and the formation of a stable Aztlan. Education of the Anglo ultimately depends upon their mentality and receptiveness to our desire for social freedom. Chicanos have only one viable means of creating Aztlan and that is through education. We are fortunate that there is no legal base for discrimination in the United States, and we must continue to act on it. The actions of the educated raza need the support of the raza masses. But, this support will have to be fostered by the educated because the masses are largely preoccupied by their immediate needs of disadvantaged and disenfranchised peoples because of capitalism and lack of political representation. As this base of support for Chicano candidates develops, the general social, political sophistication of la raza will be evident. We will have progressed beyond the limiting, group identifications of Mexicano, Chicano, Texano, etc. to a common awareness of the similarity of social problems. Perhaps we will call ourselves...it really doesn't matter what we call ourselves; just so that La Raza Unida becomes reality.

Nationwide realization to the inability of the present system to achieve the American dream will either lend support to our cause, or harden resistance to it. If Chicanos can successfully use the system for positive social change, then maybe we will be the ones to show it can really work. Should we gain national, political power, we could do much to lessen social strife and potential revolution. I feel that our people would be satisfied if positive goverance developed as a result of Chicano political power. I say this as I see nuestra raza and Americans in general, content with good standard of living.

Yet the impetus for revolution and radical social change grows stronger as one sees the increasing decay of America and the industrialized world. Industrialization has exploited the world and is literally poisoning us to death. Capitalism is a way of life and has helped create a farce of American democracy. Inability to deal with inflation and political corruption are examples of this. It is against the self-interest of those in power to destroy or dissolve the corporate monopolies which create inflation. It is also against their self-interest to grant political, economic and social freedom to the lower classes as these classes are the workers and consumers of this industrial society.

All these forces are becoming more apparent daily and consequently more people are seeing reality. The recent Presidential pardon of Richard Nixon offers a good example of the double standard of justice in the United States. Nixon's sacrificing of Cabinet Members to protect himself, displays the competitive, oppressive, inhumane, dog-eat-dog American ethics of capitalism. Such tactics are the avenue to "success" in this distorted society. It is thus conceivable why our raza is so helpless in trying to alleviate its social problems. We are also human and share in perpetuating the human misery.

Regarding institutions of higher learning and in particular this University, I see it as a vehicle offering limited alternatives. It is also threatened by radical social change. Its academic curriculum is stifled by society's capitalistic mentality and more specifically by its President's and Governor-appointed Board of Directors. Its chief compensation is a degree which offers a chance to enter society. By this "entrance" I may awake some Anglos and gain credibility for our people. We are still seen as inferior and Anglos often think nothing of using us for their own interests. There have been too few of us to say "you can't play games with me anymore". I realize that my goals are idealistic, but the point is that we have to deal with all people on an equal basis. The liberals of this University are white, middle-class who in reality, foster inequality and prejudice. And the majority of students couldn't care less. The professors themselves often promote indifference. These educators have made it and do not wish to jeopardize their security. Intellectual theories will do little for equality and personal liberty. But, this is the system. The main influence on campus are the gabacho traditions of sports, frats and suburbia values. Students on campus are mostly middle class and have very little communication with the various ethnic minorities. It is a mini-USA, all the minorities polarized with the whites running the show and returning to suburbia after class.

Chicanos have never been able to unite on or off campus because of the reasons I indicated at the beginning of this paper. I would like to add, that another factor causing Chicano disunity is our tendency to put each other down, get "sentido", and then ego trip. It seems as if everyone wants to be a "heavy". Currently MECHA at this University has a handful of "heavies" who have managed to alienate the majority of students. And this brings up another aspect of the students at San Jo. There is a preoccupation with "party-ing". Everyone thinks they are "bad" and hip and catch all the dances, concerts, etc. thrown for whatever reason. I can understand the desire to party and have a good time, but this seems to be the predominate activity. Many have some kind of income and enough money to acquire the right car, sounds, etc., and can be hip and party. Raza hasn't passed this stage in general, so it is up to a few to carry on the struggle. This is the way of all capitalistic societies. Only in socialistic states do the masses work for the advancement of all, in true community spirit. Needless to say, we are a product of our environment.



## ENCOUNTERING SELF

In this section students wonder about the question "Who Am I"? They explore their present, past and future. They search for their cultural heritage and ethnic identity within their present social context. Sensitive and provoking, the students are honest and demanding in their search for meaning and in wanting the reader to understand and share with them their personal meaning in relation to the world around them.



Innocence...goodbye

I have come to say goodbye.  
For too long,  
you have been the image of my soul.  
No longer can I carry you forth,  
unto the uncharted world of existence.

I do not say goodbye with bitterness,  
although it pains me to do so.  
You have been the companion of my flight,  
and the brother of my soul.  
And so I part with you in love and friendship  
knowing perhaps we'll never meet again.  
It was inevitable...our parting.  
For is it not the case,  
that flowers wither in the scorching sun,  
And little does the falcon know,  
its birth,  
that it must hunt the wounded dove.  
And the flowing waters of the mountain spring  
drown themselves in the fury of the raging sea.

You have dwelt within my heart,  
so true a friend you were,  
I bless the sincerity of your life,  
so candid and so assuring  
that everything was good.  
There was beauty in your blindness,  
though others took you for a fool.  
Yes, forevermore I'd be a fool  
were it not for mocking time and the destiny I choose.

I do not condemn you,  
and if I bless you...it is only fitting  
for I know that you are part of me, now lost.

You were the fortress of my heart and soul,  
and yet you had no walls.  
When the enemy came,  
you bid him forth, taking pain and sorrow,  
and almost never lost.  
The hatred of others,  
you tried to soothe with love.  
Yes, you have pitied me in strife  
and lived with me in joy.

Yes, you almost never lost.  
Then my flight began, and unto the heavens I ascended.  
Then we began to part.  
I did not need you then, or so I thought  
And in my frenzied pride,  
I looked at you one day, and said goodbye.  
It was a goodbye without a look, without a thought, without a sigh.  
So long a time it took, and so it hurt so much inside.  
Now, my life is a yesterday that was,  
a time now left to learn and live.  
Now I have come to bid you farewell,  
Now I have come to say goodbye.  
Let this be the requiem,  
That I may invoke you by.

You were my past, the root of all my life.  
A time that was, when cherries blossomed.  
And then there came that time  
I never could believe,  
To see you gone, and therefore lost from me.

Innocence! goodbye!  
Perhaps we'll meet again  
Someday,  
when I am old  
or when I die.

Baldemar Gomez

## Inwardly and Outwardly

Through centuries and centuries, women and men search diligently to discover the origin of humankind. According to religion, God made us. According to science, we are a natural accident. According to philosophy, "We think, therefore we are". According to psychology, we are a mass of hang-ups.

These disciplines present parts of the answer of who we are. Hence, this profound question, within our scope, possesses no answer.

Yet, within our minds we hold ideas as to what a breathing human being is. Within our minds, we view oneself outwardly and inwardly.

In looking at one's self inwardly,  
we represent our own universe--the world revolves about us:

God made the earth for me.  
God loves me.  
Human beings are the supreme  
creatures.  
Human beings possess  
phenomenal minds, with  
abilities yet undiscovered.

Looking at one's self outwardly one exemplifies a sand pebble upon the sea of humanity:

A unit of a people machine.  
A follower of the crowd.  
Another human being who  
hunger and cries as  
the next.  
Another student,  
another person,  
another face.

Throughout a lifetime, though, one judges oneself both inwardly and outwardly, both as a pebble and a universe. Some people, such as I, come to an understanding which represents a compromise of both views.

"A sand pebble upon the shore necessary for the seashore to exist".

In other words, a person's worthiness emerges from the reality of being and individual as well as a part of the whole human system. The mass cannot exist without individuals, and an individual cannot exist alone.

## Versos de mi Juventud

Estos versos, que nacen de mi soledad  
son míos, nada mas son míos.

Son versos que brotan del abismo insatiable  
de mi vida.  
Que habitan en el hondo,  
lo profundo, el nada de mi triste vida.

Estos son los versos de mi soledad.  
Son simples, son tristes y alegres.  
Sin tema que no sea la vida,  
son versos de un mal poeta intoxicado.  
Que, al estar enamorado,  
tiene un pleito con la vida.

Son los versos de mi juventud.  
Tesoro que se pierde día tras día.  
Son los versos impregnados con amor,  
para las Rosas, Isabeles y Marias.

Estos versos son, de las flores,  
los amores, las tristezas de mi vida.  
El jardín que adolescente se ha quedado,  
y que siempre aspira a brotar con nueva vida.

Estos versos que nacen de mi soledad,  
son míos, nada mas son míos.

Baldemar Gomez

## A Bird, City/Country

by

Susana Ornelas

Have you ever experienced flying? For me it is a pastime. Every morning I set out and fly around visiting other birds, or just for morning exercises. I have been flying now for about six or seven years. I first learned to fly while living in a big city. Growing up in a city is not good for birds such as I for we belong in the country where we have no fear of crashing into the tall buildings.

When I was younger, my grandfather told me how pretty the country was before modern man came and turned it into a city. There were trees and rich lands completely surrounded by mountains. What a sight! But man began to expand the city, building straight up into the sky causing most birds to leave the city. Summer days are awful. There is much smog caused by the traffic and tall buildings. We birds find it hard to adventure out into such a world.

When I flew around the city, I would look down and see many people moving very swiftly. They all resembled robots moving like the hands of the clock. I felt sorry for them because they were going through life so quickly without really seeing or enjoying it. They were always in a hurry whereas I would glide through the sky taking in everything life has to offer me.

Children growing up in the city really surprise me. Instead of treating us birds with respect or just leaving us alone, they shoot rocks at us to pass the time. It is a good indication of what boredom will do. My parents were killed that way.

Just recently, I moved back to the country and I'm much happier. It is not as fast or as noisy as the city. This country will probably turn into a city and I'll be forced to move again. Well, what can I say about life. It's for the birds?

The End

## I Am But I Am Not

An essay by Ofelia Armenta

Man is as constant as the rising and setting of the sun. Yet, he can be as irregular and erratic. At times he seems to be a creature living life for a purpose while at the same time searching a purpose as confused as a newly-born baby. Man seems to be the most loving and protective creature on earth but also is capable of behaving like a fierce beast. Man seems to be as all, similar to some, and like no other.

Like mankind, I too am constant in many ways while at other times rejecting what would be normative behavior. Many times I feel secure about my ambitions and goals. I am positive about my hopes and aspirations but too often, I find myself unable to believe that I can make my dreams a reality or even believe in their worth. I have the quality of loving but like any other human being, I am able to hate. I fluctuate from one end of the spectrum of human behavior to the other and have so many questions as to why but with so few answers. It is useless to categorize or describe myself.

### Who Am I?

I am a flower blowing in the wind.  
I am a bird singing in the trees.  
My outward appearance is happy  
but deep inside, I'm sad.  
It is just this question, Who am I?  
Which brings out so many sides of me.  
I can be as mellow as a cat,  
or as loud as a lion.  
I can be fierce and just plain mean.  
I can also be polite and mighty nice.  
Maybe I am what others project on to me.  
I am lost in my mind's many thoughts.  
I search to find a guiding light  
to the answer to my question.  
I am a young women,  
with desires.  
Not only sexual desires,  
but also the desire to be something,  
and to put good use to the time I have.

I am a stone rolling along a  
flowing stream,  
rolling and rolling,  
till some obstacle  
forces me to turn.

Susana Ornelas

Lamento a una Paloma herida

Mi alma esta triste,  
mujer,  
Triste como el canto  
de ave herida

¡Si! Como el canto de ave herida  
Que vuela por el viento fatigada  
Llorando su lamento  
Llorando su agonía.

¡Paloma herida!  
¡Paloma con las alas destruidas!  
¿A donde vas?  
Dí quien te llama  
Dí quien te sigue  
¿Quien es tu guía?  
¿A dónde vés en este día?

Paloma herida  
Tu canto es el canto de mi alma  
Y tu lamento, lamento del día  
Tus ojos son luzes del cielo  
Y tu dolor es mi melancolía

Tu tristeza es mi tristeza  
tu agonía es mi agonía  
Y tu sueños son mis sueños  
que esperamos día por día

Ay que volar paloma herida,  
Ay que volar  
Ay que volar con el alma herida  
Ay que volar y volar  
Aunque nos duela la herida  
Ay que cantarle al sufrir  
Ay que sufrir al cantar  
Y hay que dormir con la muerte  
para poder despertar.

Mi alma esta triste,  
mujer,  
Triste como el canto  
de ave herida

Baldemar Gomez

## Who Am I?

An essay by Angel Rivera

I am Angel Rivera, an extension of my mother and father. They are extensions of their parents. My parents were both Indian, so I am also Indian. But more than race, religion or color, I am a human being. I am with the same desires and wishes as all other human beings who seek to survive.

I am one with the earth because I would not exist if it didn't exist. I am one with the sun because without the warmth of its rays, I could not survive. I am one with the water, because only through its life-giving moisture, can I survive.

So, to ask "who am I", is wrong. Think of the heavens and the earth and ask "what is the universe", and then you will know who I am. Who am I? I am Angel Rivera, an extension of all.

...a thought..by Rosa Arellana

I am not yet what I will be and what I am is what experience has made of me. I am an occurrence of a slow metamorphous. I've grown from babe to child and from child to woman. And although I am woman, the child still exists. I've loved, I've hated and I've feared. At times I withdraw into myself only to find that question and confusion cannot be answered if I do not seek. I know that what I am, I make of myself. All experiences in life, are either good or bad and are either destructive or have value. Either way, it's I who make the choice. So, I accept life with all its challenges of love, hate and fear. I would be nothing without them.

## Who Am I?

I am a small particle in a mass nebula of human existence. I float through time drawn closer to the unknown by a ray of light.

I know in what direction I am going, but I see the end of my destiny only in my mind. And, sometimes it is pleasant, and sometimes it is not.

I can control my mind, but I can't stop from moving toward the origin of the light I see.

Who am I?

I am an autumn leaf floating down to rest. Down, down from whence I came to make room for another younger and maybe more beautiful human being.

Johnny Ornelas



## NOCHE SERENA Y OSCURA

Noche serena y oscura.  
Noche serena y oscura .  
Ayúdame esta noche,  
que tengo mi alma triste.

Tu que vives en la oscuridad  
como el agua que vive en el agua,  
como el viento que vive en el viento,  
eres nada mas que un infinito nada.

No tienes olor,  
noche serena y oscura,  
no tienes olor.  
Eres un infinito nada,  
perdido en el nada de los infinitos.

Noche serena y oscura,  
símbolo de la serenidad.  
¿Acaso la conoces?

Serenidad, serenidad,  
noche serena y oscura.  
Eso eres, pero yo se que no lo eres,  
y tu infinito nada,  
no comprendo. ¡Jamás!

Noche serena y oscura,  
ayúdame esta noche.  
Que tengo mi alma triste.

Quiero que vivas  
noche serena y oscura.  
Quiero que vivas,  
y me des consolación  
en esta vida.  
¡Vanidad! ¡Vanidad!

Solo yo existo, noche serena  
y oscura.  
Solo yo lloro, solo yo río.  
Sobretudo, solo yo vivo  
con el alma triste.

Quiero que existes,  
noche serena y oscura.  
Quiero que vivas.  
Aunque no sientes,  
unque no llores,  
aunque no ríes,  
aunque no implores.

Quiero que me quites  
la soledad.  
Quiero que me quites  
la melancolía.  
Quiero que seas la bendición,  
que cura mi alma herida.

Noche serena y oscura,  
la culpa no es tuya,  
la culpa es mía.  
Porque existo, noche serena  
y oscura.  
Porque existo, y quiero  
que existes tu.  
O noche serena y oscura,  
eres concolación y castigo,  
en el fondo de mi alma triste.

Baldemar Gomez



## UNDERSTANDING CULTURE

What is Chicano culture? The students read many interpretations and perceptions of their culture. Oftentimes they responded to frequent misconceptions of Chicano culture in the literature by writing their own impressions of the Chicano experience. But, culture is as natural to an individual as breathing or walking. So it is that Chicano culture surfaces rather dramatically, yet unobtrusively in the creative works of these students. Family roles, the meaning of death within a Chicano cultural context are just some of the cultural themes explored in the following pages.

Mi amá me lo decía  
que tenía que suceder  
ya muy pronto, hija mía  
vas a ser mujer.

El hombre es el cosechador que escoje  
entre tanta yerba  
y nosotras somos, hija mía  
fruta de esa huerta.  
Si es que muy verde te dejas de caer  
agria y amarga irás a saber.  
Es mejor estar madura  
Como una cereza tan dulce y tan pura.

Y yo en plano de creerla  
pues que iba a saber?  
sí por algo es mi madre  
y obedercerla es mi deber.

Hoy que una hija yo misma voy a tener,  
me acuerdo de mi madre y de lo  
que me decía en aquel ayer.  
Y yo le diré lo mismo a la pequeña  
que sera mía.  
Y ella ira a decir, que su ama  
se lo decía.

Stella Quesada      Ya empieza a decir  
eso que siempre he de oír.  
Que su madre si es mujer.  
Que las de hoy,  
no se comparan con las de ayer.

Que su mama siempre en la cocina.  
Que los frijoles, que las tortillas.  
Que solo hay que sentarse,  
para comer hasta jambarse.

Hombre necio que siempre hablas,  
con la boca y no la cabeza.  
¿Como puedo ser como tu madre?  
¿Que acaso eres tu como mí padre?

Y me paro frente de el  
para que me mire muy bien.  
mi madre tambien se mata,  
Pero yo soy distinta mujer.

Y aunque la admiro mucho  
por siempre cumplir con su deber,  
es de otro tiempo, de otro estilo  
que jamás podre yo ser.

Stella Quesada

## Mexican Attitudes Toward Death

An Essay by Frances Calderon

Mexican attitudes towards death are that it is inevitable, but even though it affects us profoundly, it helps to ease the grief by having other people around. Sometimes food and drinks are provided by the people who come to the grieving person's home. Just because Mexicans drink at a time when they should be mourning, doesn't mean that they lack feeling. Anglos don't see this as being very Christian. They felt, in the early Southwest, that a wake should be very quiet and a time for mourning the dead.

Death is something that we all have to learn to accept especially when the person is someone very close to us. It affects everyone differently but yet everyone experiences grief in one way or another.

### What is Death?

An essay by Mary Ellen Saldana

Death is an alarm clock that goes off unexpectedly at times to yank you from a sound sleep and at others to find you waiting for its shrill screams.

Early morning may find you peacefully asleep until sudden shrills scream from the alarm clock and jolt you into consciousness. Feeling drowsy and tired, the urge to remain under the warm covers is overcome only by the desire to stifle the loathsome screams. The sudden death of a loved one often jolts you face to face with cold reality. Sorrow, regret, and disbelief fizzle throughout your mind making it difficult to accept the loss. Like the screams of the alarm clock, death cannot be ignored. Regardless of how much time is desired to sleep late as to share with a bereaved one, when the time has arrived, it is final. Accepting the responsibilities of a new day, the alarm clock's shrill is answered. Accepting the reality that someone dear has left one forever, death is received.

There are times when you may wake up in the morning before the alarm clock sounds. Relaxing for a few minutes more, the alarm still startles you although you had prepared yourself to hear them. Terminal illness foretells us that the person may eventually die. Accepting the fact that they may soon die you consider yourself prepared. Yet news that the person is actually dead, fills you with sorrow and disbelief. And you find that you were still not ready. Death's alarm clock sounds off for everyone.

## Mujer Chicana

I seek to give wings to my thoughts that they may reach you, mujer chicana. For as I am engulfed in the mystery of my own being, I know too well that you also seek to understand that same mystery. For we humans are like two magnets, that repel and attract, as men and women repel and attract. I am fascinated by the image which comes to mind, o mujer chicana, for I seek in you, both strength and compassion, love and beauty. I am obsessed, mujer chicana, by my own predicament, and by my feelings toward you and towards the reality of life. For in life, we are but strangers seeking understanding and self transcendence. You seek that understanding, you seek that self transcendence. But how are we to do it? How are we to fight that nothingness which lasts forever near our hearts? How are we to ward off the pains of mental despair and extreme anguish? How are we to calm our souls when we are living in a world of emotional sterility? One must seek to answer these questions. I call to mind the thoughts which I see upon your faces, your eyes, your lips, your whole being, mujer chicana.

I have seen rebellion in your soul, mujer chicana, and I have sought to understand it. For life has given to you pain and sorrow, hatred and despair. And when you saw them approach, like Prometheus to the Gods of ancient Greece, you said no. And I admire such power, for it seeks to thwart off that which enchains the spirit and fetters the heart. You are like a storm then, strong and powerful, destroying the forces which oppress your mind and your soul. Yes, your rebellion is strong, but too much strength, when blind, is turned to self destruction. For I have also seen in you, what hurts the soul. For your power becomes a game, whereby you wield the banner of Thor to others in destruction. And your soul becomes heavy and burdensome, and at last aggression comes upon your heart. I do not condemn you, mujer chicana. My words are but the mirror of your self, whereby you may see in you what I have seen. Do not be blind, do not be a cynic, learn to accept and learn to love.

I have also seen in you, mujer chicana, the strength found in your soul, where you commit your being to a noble endeavor. With a sense of pride, you have entered upon the arena of life, and unlike a timid woman, you said yes to life. To fight for la huelga became a precious cause, and defeat always stood close by. Your strength was not superhuman, and so you did not rebel. Your commitment was one of will and love and a desire to transcend this life of toil and of despair. I admire you and love you so, mujer chicana. For in you, like our rebellious sister, I see dignity and nobility, love and beauty. But as I saw love

and beauty, nobility and dignity, I also saw that wave of bitterness which always seems to find its mark upon the heart of man. Do not be bitter with us men Chicanos, for we need your strength and love in order to survive. And we must always struggle to survive.

If I seek strength upon your soul, mujer chicana, within your newly found rebellious spirit and your self commitments, I also seek compassion in your soul. For there is also another Chicana, different from others, for her passivity becomes like the mild and refreshing water of a mountain stream, which I drink, to cure my anguish and the lllagas of my ailing heart. I see in you that aesthetic beauty of Christianity, which kisses the soul in its despair and calms the throbbing heart. Yes, I see great beauty and great love upon your soul. Weak and passive as you are, you too are my source of strength, for you wait for nothingness to come by. You do not cry out, you do not retreat. You let all pain be. Mujer chicana, you become the cure of my tremendous solitude, and in it you dwell. And I know too, that you suffer within your weakness and your strength, for all those who let life go by, like once I did, suffer.

The wings of my gliding thoughts have tired, and as I recall you, mujer chicana, I urge you to seek that self transcendence. Seek love, seek beauty, seek salvation, no matter what you may be. And always be, mujer chicana, an inspiration to me, a chicano, who seeks love and wisdom and understanding in this life. We need you, mujer chicana, because we need your strength and your love.

Baldemar Gomez

### La Mesa Redonda

En esta mesa redonda  
me junto con mis amigos.  
En esta mesa redonda  
me olvido de mis problemas.  
En esta mesa redonda  
se cambia mucho el ambiente  
pero la conversacion de la jujer  
y la politica nunca se olvida.  
En esta mesa redonda  
todo lo que empieza se acaba  
en lo mismo.

Victor Garza

### La Vida

La vida es una dulzura llena de  
amargura  
La vida es un mar llena de lagrimas  
La vida es un camino sin destino  
En esta vida voy corriendo  
Corro y corro a donde voy  
Corro y corro y nunca llego  
A donde voy si ya me muero.

Victor Garza

## Death in the Mexican Culture

An essay by Rosa Mendoza

In Cecil Robinson's book, With the ears of Strangers, it is pointed out that early Anglo settlers were much confused and repulsed by the Mexican attitudes toward death. I would agree with the observations of the author that there was a colliding of two cultures and the attitudes of Mexicans towards death were blown out of proportion. Interpretations by early writers of the festivals which took place in some areas of the Southwest, described them as in "very much deplorable taste". They wrote on subjects which they were not familiar with, talked too much and listened little. Indian philosophy, which I believe in, states that death is a part of life and one lives with it daily. This is what prepares individuals for the day when they are at the threshold of death and to believe that the human spirit does prevail over evil and death.

It is hard when someone near passes away. Religion teaches that since God gave life He and only He can take life. Mexican people are very religious and therefore, truly believe in this. We say that God needed these individuals and He will take care of them. These beliefs are comforting and help justify the loss of a loved one.

### When Death Comes Lurking...

Do not despair  
mi heart  
When death comes lurking  
at my door.  
She wants to be my  
friend  
O heart of mine  
forevermore.  
Do not be anguished  
o my soul  
at life's many defeats.  
She wants to show  
o soul of mine  
Just what it means to be.  
Do not be meek and shy  
o self of mine  
and never seek retreat.  
We must be strong  
to carry on  
The burdens of our being.

And we must nourish  
in our lives  
the substance of our souls  
To love and love in our despair  
And always hope for hope.  
So carry on oh life of mine  
with soul and heart as one.  
And..  
do not despair  
when death comes mocking at  
my door.  
She wants to be my friend  
Oh heart and soul of mine  
forevermore.

Baldemar Gomez





#### A CHICANO HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The Chicano, in search of identity, looks at history for a point of departure. In the history of Mexico, Chicanos find pride and honor. In studying and researching the life of Pancho Villa, they recognize that the history they have had to learn in Anglo American schools has been distorted and biased. Chicanos cannot help but wonder why they oftentimes are fourth and fifth generation Americans and yet, American and especially Southwestern history begins with the arrival of the Anglo. No wonder they turn to Mexico, and the exploits of Pancho Villa. But, the Mexican American also has a history unique to the Mexican experience. An example of this is explored with the "zoot suiters" or "pachuco" cult.

## PANCHO VILLA...MAN OF THE PEOPLE

by

Albert Fuentes

General Francisco (Pancho) Villa did many things well and many things poorly. What I would like to do is to point out the good things he did in life which made him a great man.

Before Villa joined the Mexican Revolution he was a bandit. At the age of sixteen he killed a hacendado's son for abusing his sister. After this he was an outlaw. Pancho would rob haciendas, grocers and other "respectable thieves" who were cheating the poor people. Villa would give most of what he stole away to the people who were in need. (Lansford, 1965)

In October of 1910, Villa and his men entered the Mexican Revolution through Abraham Gonzales. Within two days he recruited three hundred and sixty men from the villages of Chihuahua (in the years to come the Division del Norte led by Pancho Villa would become fifty thousand strong). He was commissioned as captain and rose to the rank of general. (Lansford, 1965)

Villa had to invent an entirely original method of warfare. He never went to a military school like the generals of the Federales. His tactics were entirely different. Up to that time Mexican armies always stayed close to railroads and supply trains. But instead, Villa would abandon his trains and unleash his entirely effective army on the field terrorizing the enemy. (Wilke and Micheals, 1969)

On the night of November 15, 1913, a freight train entered Juarez. "Federal reinforcements" unloaded in full combat gear and marched to the center of town. Nothing seemed strange to other federal troops already there. Gringos and many federal officers were having a good time. Suddenly the cry of "Viva Villa!! Arriba La Revolucion!!" was heard. Some Villistas took the sleeping barracks. Others went to the night clubs and captured the enemy officers, while machinegunners shot away resistance by the troops. The attack had been a complete surprise. In three hours Villa was in command of the city with only eight hundred men. The peons who never heard of the Trojan Horse used his wheeled version to trick a garrison of three thousand men and capture the most important city of northern Mexico without suffering a single casualty. (Pinchon, 1933)

When Villa was sent a pamphlet on the rules of war by an American commander this was his reaction. "It seems to me a funny thing to make rules out of war. It is not a game. What is the difference between civilized war and any other kind of war? It says here not to use lead (dum-dum) bullets, but I do not see why not, they do the work." Even before Villa ever heard of the rules of war there was no record where Villa had wantonly killed a man. Any member of Villa's troops who did

was executed promptly. (Wilke and Micheals)

Villa took with him the only field hospital of any effectiveness that a Mexican army ever carried. It consisted of forty boxcars manned by sixty of the best doctors and nurses of Mexico. It took the badly wounded to Jimenez, Chihuahua of Parrel. He took care of the Federal wounded as well as his own men. (Wilke and Micheals)

Ahead of his own supply Villa would have another train carrying thousands of sacks of flour, also coffee, sugar and corn to feed the entire starving population of the country around Durango city and Torreon. (Wilke and Micheals)

Pancho Villa never forgot about his people. His immediate concern was always for their welfare. Political prisoners were freed. Many schools were built and used. Villa passed a truancy law which was well enforced. Young people were encouraged to learn trades. Railroad rates were lowered for poor people who wished to migrate for work or personal reasons. When Mexicans returned from the United States they were permitted duty-free entry for their furniture and cars. He employed capable people to supervise schools, hospitals and other institutions. Large industries were taxed. Price-ceilings were set to protect the poor from profiteers. Newer and better engineers, and freight and passenger cars were brought from the United States. Heavier rails were put in for the increased loads while making train travel safer. Liquor laws were enforced rigidly. United States Custom authorities were given powerful aid to stop the drugs being smuggled across the border. Villa also had English taught in all public schools under his jurisdiction to help relations between the two countries. A tax was put on all gold and silver transported across the border. This, along with revenue from gambling and other sources, went to public works. (Lansford)

Pancho Villa finally had peace with honor after twenty years of blood and fire. He, with fifty of his dorados and their families, owned a ranch. He put schools on his ranch. The children were sent there instead of being put to work in the fields. There were workshops and anyone who wanted to be more than a ranch hand could better himself. He advanced money without interest. He showed Mexicans and people everywhere what life could be. The few who had believed in Francisco Madero and in the ideal of democracy were together in war and finally together in peace. (Lansford)

On July 23, 1923 Pancho Villa was assassinated. The people of Mexico lost a great leader and protector. Unlike many other leaders in the revolution, Pancho Villa never changed sides. He lived and died for his beloved people.

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THE ZOOT SUIT RIOTS  
by  
Mary Ellen Saldana

Introduction

The apparent social deviation of many Mexican American youth has long been questioned by sociologists and educators. Attitudes of alienation and suspicion have been used to stereotype Mexican Americans as lazy and uncaring. There are many cultural and historical facts that when researched, reveal the roots and sources of such behavior. It is the reporter's interest to present in fact an actual event which, for some, may uncover ugly memories and for others, a better perspective of why Mexican American youth are not eager to blend into the American mainstream of life.

The Zoot Suit riots started out as a minor incident in the predominately Mexican American community of East Los Angeles. The tremendous impact of the press by distorting the public's view of this incident was one of the main contributing factors for these so called riots. Another factor was the distorted opinion of the Mexican-American character held by the Los Angeles Police Department Captain. His name was Captain Ayres and his belief was that all Mexicans had inherited criminally violent minds.

The mugging of eleven sailors while they walked through a predominately Mexican-American slum sparked the unforgettable zoot suit riots. Police arriving at the scene of the crime hours later found no suspects. The suspects were reported to be Mexican; so without attempting to find and arrest the assailants, fourteen policemen remained at the station after regular duty was over for the night to form a "Vengeance Squad."

The "Vengeance Squad" entered East Los Angeles and cruised the neighborhoods. Anyone wearing a zoot suit was severely beaten before being arrested on suspicion of an assault on the sailors.

Newspaper reports that the zoot suiters had waged war on the Navy stimulated ill feelings of the sailors toward the zoot suiters. Taking the actions of the police department the previous night as a signal to proceed, they hired twenty taxi cabs to transport two hundred of themselves into

East Los Angeles to avenge the muggings.

Upon arrival, the taxi cab brigade badly beat Mexican boys wearing the zoot suit. Movie houses were entered and anyone attired in a zoot suit had his clothes ripped off and his long hair cut. Buses were stopped and zoot suiters were pulled from them and assaulted.

Prior to the riots, the press had been warned of the resentment by the Mexican-American citizens of their over-emphasizing the word "Mexican" with crime. The press ceased using "Mexican" and substituted "Pachuco" or "Zoot Suiter." These two names soon became associated with the Mexican-American citizens and synonymous with crime.

It must be understood that the Zoot Suiters were not a specific group, but rather it was the name which was applied to Mexican-American youth by the press during the riots. The zoot suit was a style of dress adopted by the Mexican-American teenagers from the Black sporty dressers of New Orleans. It consisted of peg-topped pants with pleats, a high waist under the arm pits, a long loose backed coat, thick soled bluchers and the added feature of the Mexican-American, a duck-tail hair-do. Few of the many youth beaten by sailors and consequently arrested for rioting wore the zoot suit.

Newspaper headlines continued to scream, "ZOOTERS PLANNING TO ATTACK MORE SERVICEMEN." Reports that they would "jab broken bottlenecks in the faces of their victims... beating sailors' brains out with hammers also on the program." How the press obtained all this information was a mystery but the impact of reinforced feelings of alienation between the Mexican-American community and the Anglo public was real.

A good example of the type of biased reporting is portrayed in an editorial by the Herald Express' editor, Mr. Hearst:

"Last nights zoot suit riot may be only the beginning of a long overdue cleansing of our community of the Mexican criminal gangs that the citizens of Los Angeles have come to recognize because of their flamboyant and indecent attire and ducktail hair cuts. Last night the Navy's taxi cab brigade visited the North Broadway area. According to our latest reports fifteen zoot suiters were 'cleansed' of their ridiculous garb by a disciplined group of our sea-going fighting men..."

A contrasting eye witness account of the so-called riots was reported by Al Waxman, editor of the Eastside Journal:

"At Twelfth and Central I came upon a scene that will long live in my memory. Police were swinging clubs and service men were fighting with civilians. Wholesale

arrests were made by the officers.

Four boys came out of a pool hall. They were wearing zoot suits that have become the symbol of the fighting flag. Police ordered them into arrest cars. 'Why am I being arrested?' The police officer answered with three swift blows of the night stick across the boy's head and he went down. As he sprawled he was kicked in the face. Police had difficulty loading his body into the vehicle because he was one-legged and wore a wooden limb. Maybe the officer didn't know he was attacking a cripple.

At the next corner a Mexican mother cried out, 'Don't take my boy, he did nothing. He's only fifteen years old. Don't take him.' She was struck across the jaw with a night stick and almost dropped the two and one half old baby that was clinging in her arms...

Rushing back to the east side to make sure that things were quiet here, I came upon a band of servicemen making a systematic tour of East First Street. They had just come out of a cocktail bar where four men were nursing bruises. Three autos loaded with Los Angeles policemen were on the scene but the soldiers were not molested..."

These shameful doings were extended to the Los Angeles Mexican-American community as a whole. Police cruising the area responded by arresting the victims of these attacks on the charge of inciting a riot. Some panic stricken youth turned themselves into the police station for sanction.

In retaliation small groups of Mexican-American youth struck out at unsuspecting sailors. All-out street fights erupted whenever the youth met in groups.

The Axis propoganda of the United States enemy began to use the riots to deface the American people. Mexico's Ambassador, Najera, requested that the State Department look into the matter before Mexico would allow any more Mexican nationals to enter the United States to labor as farm workers. With these two pressures the State Department insisted that the military police take steps to bring the rioting sailors under control.

Overnight passes and weekend leaves were cancelled. The disappearance of the soldiers subsequently ended the riots.

The Zoot Suit Riots have been over for thrity years, yet the feeling of suspicion and hostility ignited by them linger in the memories of many who experienced this unfortunate event. It is important to note that the Zoot Suit Riots and other similar incidents that the Mexican-American has encountered have served as road blocks on his way to enter the American lifestyle of "freedom and justice for all." For others, they have become the reason for never wanting to enter at all.

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### THE MANY FACES OF LOVE

What greater outlet for creative expression than the emotion of love. Whether it be love of family, parents, girlfriend, boyfriend, husband, wife or one's friends, it is all love and very inspiring. Without love and friendship, life is dark and sad. Students are natural extroverts. They need each other at this so crucial juncture in their lives.

Te voy a dar, mujer...

Te voy a dar, mujer  
El beso mas tierno de mi vida  
Un beso que por mucho tiempo  
Yo he escondido, en el fondo de mi alma herida

Será mi beso, mujer  
Como un verso a la soledad  
Un lamento de esperanza  
Un solloso que perdura  
Un canto de piedad  
Una luz crepuscular  
Un dolor que el alma cura

Sera, para ti nomás  
Ave fuerte pura y voladora.  
Para ti nomás.

Tu que vuelas por el viento,  
Tu que buscas el amor que yo te entrego  
Tu que sabes el dolor que siento.

Ven hacia mi, ave fuerte y amorosa  
Ven hacia mi.  
Que mis alas destrazadas han quedado  
con el tiempo.  
Y volar hacia tu lado  
yo no puedo;  
Ni te encuentro.

Te voy a dar, mujer  
El beso mas tierno de mi vida, ave fuerte y amorosa.  
Para ti nomas. Para ti nomás.

Baldemar Gomez

## Meeting of a Friend

by

Juana Alonzo

Surely this must be one of the coldest nights, I thought to myself as I stood waiting for the bus. My figure was the only human figure on that wide and lonely street. The only light was that of the neon light reflecting on my head.

Suddenly a gust of cold wind rushed through my body. It made my bones shiver and made me more conscious of the thinness of my worn out sweater. I caressed my shoulders. But it seemed that the law of friction, nature itself, was not on my side. With little success, I looked about me searching for a place to hide from such bitter weather. There was the perfect place. It was a huge block of broken cement guarded by some tall shrubs. I sat on the block and waited patiently with my eyes fixed at the direction the bus was to appear. The street was still dark and lonely. I watched hopefully, yet knowing that buses ran once an hour after seven p. m. With my eyes fixed in that direction, my tiredness soon took over me. My head fell upon my folded arms for rest.

As my head rested, my mind recalled my experience at night school from where I had just come. I recalled the loneliness I felt in such a vast sea of people. I recalled hundreds of eyes looking at me yet not seeing me.

Again a gust of wind passed. I thought of my need for food, my need of money, my need for warmth. My mind bombarded my soul with countless thoughts that I felt I was drowning in my own misery.

Tap, tap..., I lifted my tear-stained face suddenly. There was a kind, sweet smile shining at me. Your eyes were also shining. As I looked deeper though, I saw they had also cried the tears I cried. I saw you also felt the coldness of the night.

"What time does the bus come"? You asked. "In about an hour," I responded. "You also go to night school, don't you". You inquired. "Yes I do", I answered. Then you spoke those words which helped change my life. "From now on why don't we wait for the bus together", you said.

And so it was. From that day forward we waited for the bus together. From that night forward, we shared our sadness, our happiness, our problems, our successes, our tears and our smiles.

Since that night, which occurred three years ago, I learned something very important. When you have a friend you don't feel the coldness of the night.

Inspired by "A Mi Amiga", from La Chicana Piensa.

Bienvenida a la Primavera

El agua brota...  
lentamente.  
Besando las calles vacías.  
Y una paloma  
en el cielo vuela,  
dando a la primavera  
su bienvenida.

Se baña una rosa  
con la frescura del día.  
Vestida con la sonrisa  
de la alegría.

Despiertan hoy arboledas  
con nueva vida.  
Se desvisten del invierno  
y su honda melancolía.

El agua brota...  
lentamente.  
Y una paloma  
en el cielo vuela,  
dando a la primavera  
su bienvenida.

Baldemar Gomez

¿Quién conocerá las llagas de mi alma?  
¿Quién verá la sangre de mi herida?  
¿Quién verá su triunfo en mi derrota  
al compararme con su vida?

Mundo loco y dolorosa.  
¿Quién me entregará su amor,  
al verme con la cruz sobre mi espina?  
¿Y quién me entregará su compasión,  
al verme esclavizado entre mi vida?

¿Quién escuchará mis cantos por las noches?  
¿Y quién escuchará mis rosas poesías?  
¿Quién escuchará mis pensamientos?  
¿Y quién te va querer como te quiero,  
si tu te acabas este día?

Baldemar Gomez

### Which Way?

My friends tell me to go to you  
when I'm down, when I'm troubled.  
Yet, I feel guilty and selfish.  
I only come to your house  
when I'm down.  
My friends say I need you.  
They say you're the light,  
the way.  
Sometimes I ask myself who  
you really are?  
But they say you're my creator,  
You're my love.  
Am I to question love?

Daniel Pimentel

### Love Me Not

Love, love me not,  
You are not the one I love.

You are but that poor unfortunate person  
who I desired to use,  
as my escape.

In the midst of this confusion  
and misery,  
you represent my peace of mind.

It is you I run to in my mind  
for peace and consolation.

When I find myself in the depths  
of this earthly dungeon,  
again, it is you I run to...

Voyaging into a world of fantasy,  
fantasy with no worries,  
no sorrows, no fears.

You are my heaven,

So please, love me not.  
For it is not you whom I love  
but the idea of you.

Juana Alonzo

Soñe que el mundo se acabava...el otro día

Soñe que el mundo se acabava,  
...el otro día  
Al verlo destruido por los odios  
De miradas,  
Peridas en el nada de la vida.

Y ví la procesión  
De muchas gentes  
Buscando sus desfrases escojidas  
Vestidas con sus caras de ojos tristes  
Como quiñeras navegando por la vida.

Ví dolores y agonía en cada cara,  
En cada cara yo ví parte de la mía  
Y en esa procesión que fué mi espejo  
grité desesperado mi plegaria, (en mi agonía)

Mundo loco y doloroso,  
Tu que has medio matado el alma mía.  
Me brindes el dolor mas espantoso  
Al verme aislado de personas extingidas.

Mundo loco y dolorosos  
¿Quién se reirá de mis tristezas?  
Al verme que me arrastro por la vida  
¿Y quien penetrara mi alma  
Con la mirada que asesina?

Baldemar Gomez

Sin olvidarlo todo...Una mentira fue'

Una mentira fue'  
tu amor...mujer  
Que voy a olvidar  
poquito a poco...sin olvidarlo todo

Tu fuiste bendición,  
en mis noches de dolor  
Y ternura,  
en mis días mas ansiosos

Entrastes a mi alma triste,  
la viste fatigada y olvidada  
en su derrota.  
Y con la frescura de tu ser,  
Calmaste mi dolor y mis angustias.

El milagro sucedió  
por un tiempo...nada mas,  
por un tiempo

Tu amor perdido fue',  
Un grito de dolor y desesperación  
Al ver mi obscura realidad.

¡Ay traicion!  
Mi alma esta arrancada  
Parte se mi ser se desraigó.  
Y hoy te amo con toda la pasión del odio,  
Y te odio con todas las fuerzas de mi amor.

Una mentira fue'  
tu amor mujer  
que voy a olvidar  
poquito a poco  
sin olvidarlo todo

Baldemar Gomez



## CHICANO AND SOCIETY

How does the Chicano relate to society? Anglo American society. How does society react to the Chicano? Anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists have been telling Chicanos for years how we relate to society. But, where has society been deficient. The students did not try to analyze these issues in particular, they just wrote about what they knew, felt, or what has been their need to express.



# THE CHICANA AND THE ALCOHOLIC

By

Rosa Wood

The following paper has been written through interviews with members of Alanon, an alcoholic affiliated organization whose members are the family of alcoholics. All members must remain anonymous, therefore any quotes, or discussion thereof, can only be referred to as a source of Alanon meetings.

"My name is...and my husband is an alcoholic." These words, spoken by a Chicana, are the words first spoken by any member of Alanon when first addressing the group. The uniqueness of this sentence, is not so much that the woman is admitting to being the wife of an alcoholic, but that it is a Chicana who has recognized that she must first learn to accept her condition before helping her husband. The background of the Chicana must be further discussed in order to fully understand why it is such an achievement for her to be able to tell others her problems with alcoholism.

The Chicana is becoming more aware that her position in the home is more important than just that of domestic maid. She no longer accepts the mental or physical abuse of alcoholism, nor does she retaliate. (Alanon encourages self-awareness and the ability to be non-reactive too...)

Alanon creates a feeling of mutual respect, understanding and a true desire to discover why Chicana tolerance is so strong, particularly towards alcoholism, even though she is suffering. Even though the women I spoke to have different names and personalities, they all shared in the misery of alcoholism. Each agreed that as Chicanas, they react differently not only towards alcoholism, but any family problem. In order to understand the topic discussed in this paper better, I asked a series of questions of each of the women. It was my conclusion that Chicana behavior has been greatly influenced by cultural background, religious background, social influence and economic influences. The individuals questioned were also of the same opinion. We will now attempt to relate these factors to the inability of the Chicana to develop the character which would enable her to cope with alcoholism.

## Cultural Background and its Affects

What makes the Chicana who deals with alcoholism different from her Anglo peers? The overwhelming answer to this

was cultural influence.

"As a child I instinctively recognized that my brother always got away with more than I did. My father ran the house and was very strict with us girls whereas nothing was ever said to the boys. When I asked why, my father just said that boys could take better care of themselves than girls. My mother's answer was that she had to protect us for the one man we would marry someday."

A parent's influence and education is of major importance to a child. When a girl is told that because she is a girl, she doesn't have the same privileges as her brother, she remembers this when she grows up and finds that it hinders her ability to cope more readily with a situation. How can she learn to cope with a problem, when the solution has always been in the hands of the male peer?

"When I first decided to do something for myself in dealing with my husband's problem, I was scared and unsure of myself. I felt as if I should have his permission to be here."

At the same time, when seeking assistance, the Chicana, as a member of an organization which is ninety per cent Anglo, finds it hard not to feel a certain amount of discomfort.

"I felt alienated. Here were women who would readily leave their husbands if need be. My way of life is too different and my experience in family matters is that a woman stays with her husband no matter what the situation."

Although the above quote was that of only one member, all ten Chicanas shared her feeling. Cultural background makes the Chicana believe that she must bear a false courage. Not one of these women were happy that they tolerated their situation.

"I can see now where I have followed the pattern of my parents, especially my mother. I can still hear my mother now, when my father would come home drunk. 'Asi son los modos de los hombres.' I am sorry but I'm not ever going to let my daughter believe that she has to endure the hardship of an alcoholic problem."

It would seem that the man is freer to do as he pleases. He chooses his own friends and has his own circle away from the home. In this case, his drinking buddies are away from the home.

"Now that I think about it, our parents are to blame for the position I am in. Mexican families are more lenient with their sons letting them do as they please. My brother has grown into the biggest "macho" I have seen. He is still doing as he pleases even though he now has a wife and family. He is not an alcoholic but the relationship is still the same."

The above opinions are that of ten Chicanas, but of a ten out of ten ratio, they merit attention. Yet, it is becoming more evident that this kind of cultural influence is diminishing.

"I see the younger Mexican girls of today and how they don't put up with anything from these men. I wonder what it is their mothers are telling them. Maybe the time has come when more Chicana women are questioning what their mothers are telling them, or else they are seeing for themselves what it leads to. I know I sure did."

### Religious Influences

The second most prominent influence on the Chicana's attitudes is that of religion. All of these women were raised Catholics, attended church every Sunday and studied their catechism.

"One of the things that sticks out in my mind is when a priest told us that Eve tempted Adam into sinning and that we as women would forever do penance in service to our men. I can see why these guys think that we should serve them. After all, they were being told the same thing too."

Two of the women, after continual abuse from their drunk husbands, sought the advice of a priest. It was their intention to be divorced or separated from their husbands.

"The priest asked me if I was doing anything to provoke him. It was his understanding that some of the women of his parish had very sharp tongues. He said that the church would not recognize a divorce and that separation must happen only in a critical event. Should I wait until my husband kills me? He further pointed out to me that I was an adult and knew what I was saying when I repeated my vows of marriage. In other words, for better or for worse."

The church as we can see, makes it difficult for the Chicana to escape the alcoholic husband. Furthermore, it supports a man who is usually not active in the church himself.

"The funny thing is that my husband has stopped going to church since about two years ago and here Father tells me to stand by the side of my husband. How do I shed that guilt if I decide to leave him?"

Religious ideology is good for the person without problems. The person with solid, painful problems finds it difficult to remain loyal to their feelings.

"I keep toying with the idea of divorce. It seems to be the only solution. I know within myself that it would be the right thing to do, but yet, how can I when there has never been a divorce in my family and the church would probably disown me."

The religious aspect causes many contradictions. I myself, find contentment when I seek guidance but yet, I don't believe that everything should be left in the hands of God. God isn't going to stop a man from beating on his wife or children. Only the woman by helping herself, can do this. The Chicana seems to want to leave the entire matter in the hands of God.

"I used to pray to God to make my husband stop drinking. Now I know that all He can do is give me strength to do something with myself to cope with it. How weak of me to expect help from another source other than myself."

It was the unanimous feeling of the members that religious and church interference can only hinder efforts to solve the Chicana's problem with alcoholism. These women have recognized how they feel and they believe that more and more Chicanas in their situation, should discover this also.

"I still have my religious feelings but I am just going to be my own person and make my own decisions as to what is best for me. More important, I am going to start telling other Chicanas about my feelings and experiences. We have to start a change somewhere."

### The Affects of Social Influence

Current social movements, especially in support of women, have made an impression on the Chicana. The women's reaction to women's liberation is that it has been too radical at times. One older woman said she didn't dig taking off her bra and burning it in front of everyone. But the women's movement has come to mean more than taking off one's bra and going natural. It encourages equality of women not only in the professional world, but also for women like the Chicana who have not thought beyond the world of her family and husband.

"If it had not been for all the publicity of women's liberation, I would not be here at Alanon. At home I play the part of the doting wife and mother. I have a mind of my own and a character of my own. My husband should be glad that I am coming here. It has been my pattern to remain silent while he carries on with his drinking. Unfortunately, my silence led me to a nervous breakdown. At least here I can see that I am not the only woman with the problem of an alcoholic in the family. My attitude has changed from the very first day that I came here. And my ulcer doesn't act up anymore either.

Does the Chicana see herself as more than a mother and a wife?

"At this time I feel that I am already committed to my 'occupation'. I truly feel that my children need me. I have to show them how to accept their father for what he is. If I had it to do all over again, yes, I would be more than just a mother and a wife. There is more confidence in today's woman as far as careers are concerned. As for me, I utilize my confidence in myself so that I can maintain a balanced attitude about love and acceptance."

Does the woman's movement make you feel inferior?

"No, my reason for being here at Alanon is to learn to accept what I have now and not be envious of what others have. I just hope that there are a lot of Chicanas out there that see that there is an opportunity for them to go beyond the domestic scene."

#### Economic Influences\*

#### Conclusion

In conclusion, I say three cheers to the Chicana. If the feelings of the few women I interviewed are indicative of the majority of Chicanas today, then things are surely improving. The Chicana is no longer going to stand idly by while her husband physically abuses or mentally humiliates her. Members of Alanon have gained self-confidence from each other. True, the alcoholic must be helped. But before anyone can help him, he must learn to help himself. And, the personal duty of a wife is to herself. There is a beautiful saying initiated by these Alanon members which every Chicana should adhere to, "today I start by helping myself and then..."

\*Editor's note: Although a significant portion of this paper was misplaced, the editor has chosen to include it anyway because of the extremely relevant, insightful and unique perspective of the Chicana presented in this paper.

Look What You've Done

You tore apart my native tongue,  
and laughed at all the songs we sang.  
You called our women whores,  
and never let us in your gringo stores.  
"Mi familia" has suffered many years,  
and shed too many tears.  
But now we're finally fighting back.  
How much can the gringos stand?  
You took our culture and pushed it aside,  
and tried to tell us it was something to hide.  
You took mi raza and tore them apart.  
But watch out gringo  
We're making a new start.  
Just remember Gringo...  
Someday raza power  
will overcome.

Geneva Fernandez

Is There Survival?

Take a seed and plant it.  
Take water and watch it grow.  
See the sprout above the  
ground,  
See it grow, tall and strong.

So strong and fierce and yet,  
So gentle and beautiful.  
Cut its leaves and branches,  
see it stripped of its beauty.

Take its water, watch it wilt,  
Cut its roots, watch it die.  
Take a man and a woman.  
Watch a baby be born.

Take love and watch it grow.  
See the baby as a boy.  
See this boy as a man.  
See the man so tall and  
strong.  
See this man so full of life  
and love.

Take his culture and see him  
crippled.  
Take his pride and see his nakedness.  
Take this man who has lost his existence.  
Take this man and watch him die.

Ofelia Armenta

A One Act Play

by

Susana Ornelas

Scene: A hot September day at the end of summer. Two guys, Flaco and Tramp, are just passing the time. They are standing on a street corner on the northeast side of Los Angeles. Tramp has just been released from the can a couple of days ago and is trying to decide how to spend this hot summer evening with his carnal, Flaco.

Flaco: Well, ese, what do you think? You wanna go and pick up on some ninas and find a nice cozy spot to get low's?

Tramp: Yeah, Flaco, but you gotta remember I don't have any feria.

Flaco: Yeah, and I only have enough para un seis.

Tramp: Well maybe, ese, while you're bying the pisto I can check out the scene. Maybe we can pull a quick job. I got a gun, man, but it isn't loaded.

Flaco: Who's to know, ese. Do you think we can do it?

Tramp: Sure we can do it. Like don't turn all cherry on me. Relax. I got it all figured out.

Flaco: I'm not turning cherry, pero tu sabes... I wouldn't like to end up in the can just for pulling a job on a liquor store.

Tramp: Con calma, ese. No one will see us. It will work like a charm. Just follow my instructions and everything will go "de aquellas". What do you think I learned all those months in the can? How to get layed? Ha, ha... I got...this system... figured...out...(fade into background).

So Flaco and Tramp make tracks to the liquor store. Before they enter, Tramp puts the gun inside the waist of his pants and instructs Flaco to enter first.

Flaco: I'd like a six-pack of Budweiser and some frajos.

Man: That will be two dollars even.

(enter Tramp)

Tramp: Pay the man Flaco. I'll take all the money in the cash register. Old man, this is a stick-up.

Man: Look here young man, put down the gun and I'll give you all the money. Just put down the gun.

Tramp: Like, man, I'm not that stupid. Here put the money in the bag and no one will harm you. Hey, Flaco, take this bag of money and meet me outside. Keep trusha for the placa.

Flaco: Okay, ese, but hurry, I'm getting nervous.

So Flaco with the money under his arm begins to walk out of the store. Just as he is leaving, he sees two pig cars turning the corner. In his haste to warn Tramp, Flaco drops the money and yells at Tramp.

Flaco: Hey ese, the placa. Let's split...

So Tramp and Flaco begin to run out of the store but are met at the door by two pigs. Tramp tries to run and in his efforts, is shot and killed by the store owner. Flaco, completely mind-blown, is hand-cuffed and arrested. As Flaco leaves, he passes where Tramp lies dead. He mumbles with a sigh of despair...

Flaco: Tramp, I'm sorry ese, but I think the system had us figured out! ; Por amor de Dios!



## School Whirl

Miss Smith is ready to call the third  
group up for reading. Out with our  
neighborhood books.

See Jane and Dick run.  
See John cry!  
Why is he crying Miss Smith?  
It's just a reaction.  
Oh well, Miss Smith knows best.  
She's the teacher. She's been  
to college and wears nice clothes.

I wonder why papa name me Juan  
and not Dick or Tom?  
I wonder why papa never comes  
home wearing a suit.

Gee, the paint on the wall  
is beginning to peel.  
I wonder where that spider went.  
Ding-a-ling. Recess at last!

Juan cries. Miss Smith...  
"you'll have to stay in today and practice  
your English".  
See Jane run with Tom.  
See Juan cry.

Daniel Pimentel

No one was in the room  
So I drank the water  
from the vase. I felt  
so embarrassed when I  
looked up and learned that  
the water was artificial.

Daniel Pimentel

Bright lights shine down to the glowing  
water  
Soldiers are swimming and their guns  
are floating.  
Death rises the sun.  
Soldiers are finally sleeping in peace.  
Tears one by one fill the earth and  
the damned covers the red, white and blue.

Daniel Pimentel

Que Pinche Aguite

By

Jose H. Lopez

- Scene: Two young Chicanos having a conversation in the projects, a project like all the others where Chicanos have been "relocated". They have been relocated due to the many freeways and highways which always seem to slice through the heart of the dwindling barriocitos. Both of these young Chicanos are unemployed...on parole...looking for something...holding on...holding on to the only thing they have left, their common life of waiting.
- Manny: Horale, what's happening Homes?
- Homes: Natchos, Manny, Natchos. How's things with you?
- Manny: De aquellas Homes...how's your carnalito Sammy? How'd he come out on the torsida?
- Homes: Shit ese, they're shipping him back to gladiator school.
- Manny: YYYYY, Que pinche aguite Homes...Mi tio Chon is going back to the Board next month.
- Homes: Hey, that's all right Manny.
- Manny: Simón, he thinks he'll get his shit this time... Chingado (pronounced Chingow)...Chon's been down a long time.
- Homes: Simón, un chingale.
- Manny: Un pinche dime (thyme) this trip. Hijo, man if he gets denied...
- Homes: Chale, he'll hold his mud.
- Manny: Hey Homes, did you hear what happened to Alex?
- Homes: El Kiko?
- Manny: Simón, lo clabaron en Tracy.
- Homes: They dusted Kiko ese? (very disbelieving)
- Manny: Yeah, Homes, three or four dudes got wasted.
- Homes: When?

Manny: Last week Homes.

Homes: Que pinche aguite...and my primo Tino is going to Tracy.

Manny: Oh yeah Homes, he got busted for stuff, que no?

Homes: Chale, he downed his carnalitas caseworker. The dude was hassling her and cut off her stamps.

Manny: yyyyy, que pinche aguite, maybe she should have told the dude she's Vietnamese.

Homes: Simon, that caseworker's a cold dude. He's the one that busted Gloria too.

Manny: Que gatcho. Hey Homes, what about your carnale Danny, how's he doing?

Homes: Yeah, he's still on that cletcha trip. Every I see him he sounds more like that last PD I had...

Manny: El Anderson, Homes?

Homes: Simon, man he sold me out de volada. But, I hope Danny gets his shit together. Hey Manny, you know anybody jalando in the office?

Manny: Chale Homes, why?

Homes: Oh, la carnala de Johnnie is trying to get an apartment but they're hassling her cause she has too many kids and she doesn't make enough at her jale.

Manny: yyyy, que pinche aguite...vamos pal canton de Rudy?

Homes: Chale, I got to take my tia to the migra, they're trying to deport my tio Mike.

Manny: Oh si Homes, que pinche aguite (spits)...next you know, they'll deport my carnala to Texas and my jefito to Nuevo Mexico.

Homes: Hey, horale, I'll check you later Manny.

Manny: Horale Homes, he, make it to Alice's later. We got a good stash and we gonna get down ese.

Homes: Que viva el party! (power sign exchanges)

Manny: Horale, te watcho Homes (hurrying off). Hey tell Sammy every thing's cool. I got lots of homes en Soledad!

Homes: Yeah, later Manny....

Simon Carnalitos, Carnalitas....

QUE PINCHE AGUITE!

# The Problems Within the Institutions

by

Angel Rivera

The United States Penal System is composed of county, city, state and federal institutions. These are institutions built to be filled. This means that there were laws that were made to be broken. The individuals in these institutions have committed crimes ranging from a misdemeanor, including the everyday parking tickets to traffic violations and assaults; to the more serious crimes labeled felonies.

This is a multi-billion dollar business. It needs to be looked at through realistic eyes that have not been clouded by the dollar sign. How can anyone put monetary value on a human life? We have to remember that we are dealing with people and not just a building. We must look to find the reason behind the "unsocial" behavior and when we have found some of the answers to that big question, then we will be able to ask ourselves, what can we do to change this.

I am writing from my own perspective of what one faces behind the walls, the social interactions, the conflicts in values, norms and habits and the various changes that are forced upon you. The public should be able to feel and understand more of what the 'system' really is and how it has the potential to change those within it. But the question is, are these the changes we are looking for? Are they going to help the criminal become rehabilitated or is it helping to make him more bitter and resentful towards the 'system'?

There are programs that are supposed to alter the irregular or unsocial behavior of the inmates which are called rehabilitation programs. In reality there is no way these programs can help the criminal because the real intent has never been to rehabilitate but to punish and unless this attitude is changed, nothing will be solved.

The penal system basically consists of five branches. The first is juvenile hall which deals with young adolescents who most often begin as runaways but the charges sometimes go on up to murder. The hall itself is a local structure with both boys and girls. There are also ranches and foster homes for those that are being held for longer periods of time. Here, the young person begins to feel the contours of the mold he is being cast into and he will soon find out what it feels like to be an outcast, both mentally and physically. The juvenile, who has never had any rights, is only now entitled the right to legal advice.

The state also has a system called the California Youth Authority (CYA) which involves youths from the ages of ten

to twenty-six. Sentences handed down by the juvenile courts range from ninety days to eighteen months. Each C.Y.A. institution is categorized by age. Different types of trades are offered from plumbing to the more sophisticated, meaning the electricians. Also, traditional schooling ending with the high school diploma is offered. But the education offered in the institutions also has its drawbacks. For instance, in the C.Y.A. in Pasa Robles, if one enters into the high school equivalency classes he is not able to be released until the classes are over. Besides that, the instructors don't care about the quality of education they give because they have the typical hate for the criminal-type that is found throughout the system's administration.

Over fifty per cent of the inmates are minorities and about ninety per cent of the instructors are Anglos. One of the oldest C.Y.A. institutions, Preston School of Industry, is renowned throughout the state for its race riots and transfers of C.Y.A. inmates to prison. Its race riots and other disturbances are put down with tear gas and guns.

Marching is mandatory to and from the other buildings within the walls of the oldest C.Y.A. Before anyone is committed to one of these C.Y.A.'s, the individual must go through the process of clinical guidance centers for evaluating and forwarding to the appropriate institution. This is dead time lasting anywhere from thirty to sixty days. One center is located in southern California, Norwalk, one in Sacramento called Perkins and the third in Tracy for the hard core. These individuals mix with the adult state prisoners.

The local government deals with the fourth branch of the penal system which are the city and county jails. Here individuals are locked up for minor ticket warrants or are awaiting trials. Most county systems have farms or ranches that deal in sentences from thirty days to twelve months, the latter being the longest you can get of county jail time. County jails can be thought of as the middle between the C.Y.A. and adult prisons. Most of what happens in the prisons takes place in the county jail but to a lesser degree. While in jail the individual has better access to legal advice than when in prison.

California has the biggest and supposedly the best penal system in the country although it is one of the most violent. It consists of twelve major institutions with an average inhabitation of twelve hundred. Total population of both the men and women number twenty-eight thousand adults. The institutions range in purpose from dealing with dope addicts to the infamous death row in San Quentin. Sentences range from one year and a day for escaping from the county jail, to life. Age group legally ranges from eighteen years on up.

All prisoners are under the indeterminate sentence of the state. Under this sentence one has no definite date of release. For instance; for first degree armed robbery, the judge sentences the person for what the law prescribes which

is five years to life...The seven member parole board determines the actual length of time to be served within that time limit. Attitude and conduct while in prison, past criminal record and the crime itself, are the factors the board uses to make its decision.

If you are accused of a crime while inside but have not been convicted, it will still be used against you. All personnel and staff turn in an evaluation which is used in deciding a release date. Also, when you are sentenced, the local D.A. and the judge will write their recommendations which are used by the board and will stay in your file for life.

Touching on the makeup of the staff, it reflects very closely that of the C.Y.A. Within the prison, intermingling among the races is emphasized and considered a sign of rehabilitation. Nevertheless, each race tends to associate with their own kind, especially the chicano.

Prison violence recently has prompted serious concern because more guards are now being killed than in the past. Prior to this, it was mainly inmate against inmate. Yet, much of the money meant for rehabilitation is going into building more gun towers. There doesn't seem to be any foreseeable changes in living conditions or in programs offered because the programs will either be staffed by those with rigid minds and values or the programs will be geared towards assimilation. Either way they are totally resented by chicanos.

The chicano is the best organized ethnic group within the institutions. This is due to the fact that they will stick together under all circumstances and they will always help any chicano in need. This unity is not found in any other group and it would be interesting to find out why this is so. Nevertheless, it gets them nowhere because the hierarchy of the penal system is made up of ninety per cent Anglos. If Anglos can't seem to get along with each other, how are they going to be sympathetic to the needs of others? But that is the way things are. It is called justice.

Perhaps, in conclusion, 'justice' should be defined. Is it right for certain people to have more than the rest of the population? Is society free to dictate what is right and wrong with two or three different sets of rules for a given situation? Are the poor to be allowed to help themselves or better their condition through what are oftentimes the only means available, and end up in jail for their efforts to give their families what they need to survive? These are the facts of our present system of justice.

The question that you should be asking yourself is, 'is some type of reform really needed?' If you answer yes, then you need to ask yourself what it is that you can do to help. If you answer no, then you are just part of the problem.



### CHICANO FAMILY PORTRAITS

The Chicano family is known to be united and dedicated to each other. Although these may be qualities that would instill comfort and tranquility in most families, it is not necessarily so in Chicano families. This again is disturbed within the context of the Chicano experience in the United States. In spite of the sadness and frustration we are introduced to in these writings, we find relief in the young boy's fantasies, years away from the confusion of "el hijo" in Mama Wants To Be.

## MAMA WANTS TO BE

### A Short Story

by

Ruth Corona

The lonely sounds of night began to make their music. The worried mother looked up from her darning and shook her head sadly. Again her son has not come home. She looked toward her small kitchen where the cold frijoles and chorizo lay untouched. She smiled involuntarily when she recalled all those earlier times when she waited up for him. He would always try to sneak in around two o'clock, but she would always be waiting with her forehead frowning in deep concern. She just couldn't, wouldn't sleep, knowing her hijo was out "who knows where". Her heart seemed to stop whenever the siren of an ambulance or patrol car passed by. She would cross herself and ask the lord to be merciful to those who were causing the sirens. She prayed it wasn't anyone she knew.

The worried look always managed to leave her face when she heard her hijo's car drive up. She would be standing there in their small hall when he entered. As he walked in she would come up to him and place her small brown hands on his face and kiss him. She would look at his boyish face of seventeen and smile lovingly. Her son always gave her a warm abrazo and scolded her jokingly for waiting up. She would always shrug it off by saying that she had begun sewing or ironing and had lost track of time. Her son knew her better than that and he would just shake his head in defeat. He knew his mama did it out of love and who was he to question her love? Before he could complain again, she would scurry into the kitchen to warm up the chorizo and beans.

Now, six years had passed since she had touched the boyish face of seventeen and life, like time, had to change. Many changes had taken place in that short span of time. The anxious mother still worried about her hijo, but now she never knew when he would decide to come home. Her hijo, now a man would wander in at different hours of the night or early morning. He always came home borracho so now she would have to leave the lights on for him so he would not stumble accidentally. Tonight he had come in drunk and fallen asleep on the living room couch.

The tired mother would see her son laying on the couch drunk and her eyes would begin to water. "Pobrecito hijo" she would mutter as she removed his shoes and socks. A man, yet not such a man. He was 23 and still so unsure of his life. There would be nights when she would sit quietly next to her snoring son and just gaze into his face so intently that her



son's face would become an unrecognizable blur. She would rub her eyes fiercely to regain their focus. She worried so much about her hijo. He was already suffering so much and still had a whole lifetime ahead of him.

The woman sadly remembered the time he had come home so proud because he was leaving to join the army. But he was imitating those friends of his who were flunking out of school. And like them, he was bored with life and wanted to try something different.

While Army life was different, it wasn't exactly what they had in mind. Most of his friends, after the first grueling 18 months, had gone AWOL; but her hijo was determined to stick it out. While his friends had gone home and were bumming around with dishonorable discharges, he had been determined to take all the abuse from his army superiors. The woman recalls all those letters her hijo had sent telling of how army superiors would pick on him and some black privates just because they weren't white. She remembers writing to him in broken English telling him to have the strength to hold on. She did not want a dishonorable discharge for him. Life was hard enough already for Mexicans without adding to it. The woman decided to pray those long five years for her son's official release.

The day came when her son returned to her, older but still her hijito. He called long distance at 4:00 in the morning saying he would be arriving at the San Francisco airport at 5:20 a.m. The woman's husband and younger son went out to meet him. She waited impatiently at home. She warmed hot coffee and fried steak and frijoles in case her hijo might be hungry. She remembered that her hijo had a large appetite, so she made a dozen tortillas just for him. What seemed like an eternity finally came to pass. Her hijo had returned to her. There he was, standing in the doorway with an army sack full of soiled clothes. He slowly dropped the sack and held open his arms. The woman, already weeping, walked slowly to him. She reached upward and gave her hijo the abrazo that she had been waiting so long to give.

Those memories frequently invaded the mother's thoughts as she watched her hijo sleep. Painful memories which invaded her dreams as mercilessly as they invaded her thoughts, haunted her. She recalls with wet eyes, the time when she found drugs in her son's room. Her heart had begun to pound violently and she thought she would pass out. She had found a little sack of white powder and some white pills. She knew the danger of these drugs and quickly flushed them down the toilet. She knew it would not end there. She was afraid to confront her son with this secret. She knew how much her son valued his privacy. She had destroyed the drugs out of love for him.

It was her deep love for him that made her worry. It was her love for him that made her weep. And it was her love for him that finally gave her the courage to confront him with her fears.

How scared she was when she knocked and entered her hijo's room. She involuntarily sat down on his bed to keep from shaking. She looked at her son. He had now focused his attention on her. He looked so tired for a young man of 23. Army life had really taken its toll on her poor hijo. It had abused her son and introduced him to a cold, unwelcoming world. It has also showed him how to escape from that world with the help of drugs. The army had cheated her son and robbed him of his youth, fantasies and dreams. A shell of a young man who could not find himself or explain his existence was all that was left. The woman now shudders when she recalls how she questioned her son about the drugs she had found. She asked when he took them and what purpose they served. The answer she received from her son only confused her more. He had at first stared at the ground when she began the questions, but gradually he looked up and met her anxious gaze. He quietly got up and put his two large hands on her shoulders and said, "Mama, this is a very hard way of life. People who are born into it are only born to suffer. I tried to live life like you and papa, but I can't. I can't be satisfied with this kind of life. I want something else but I really don't know what. Living here is slowly driving me insane, yet I have nowhere else to go. Mama, I love you very much but I can no longer really talk to you. We have two different outlooks on how life should be interpreted. You would be very hurt if I told you half the things I've done in my 23 years of life. When you look at me you don't see a confused and angry man questioning life, you see only what you want to see through those dark, loving eyes. You see only a little boy who has done wrong and should be scolded for misbehaving. I am no longer that child who ran to your arms whenever something frightened me. I can no longer do that mama. My life can no longer be open for you and papa to investigate and control. Even though I have a family that loves me, I feel terribly lonely. I feel like I have no one. I scream out to the world and the only response I hear is my own pitiful echo. So you see mama, you can live happily in the world you and papa have created for yourselves, but I am and will always be alien to it. I must find my own world, mama, my own world".

The woman quietly thinks and then shakes her head, still confused by what her son had tried to convey to her that night. She understood so little of life. She has always been sheltered from life as all young women in Mexico had been. She had never traveled outside her little hometown until she married at nineteen. The marriage had been more out of impulse than love. She had only known her husband three months and before she had realized, she was married. She had not really been thinking of marriage because she was much more interested in singing. She sang with her sisters at fiestas and weddings. They were

considered very good. Her future husband however, had not been too enthusiastic about her singing career and had told her so. With little pressure, he convinced her to leave everything behind and marry him. She now wonders what would have become of her life if she had been strong enough to tell him what she really had wanted. If only she had spoken up at the right time. If she had not married him she would still be in Mexico right now doing...who knows what? She sighed. If, if, if...what a powerful word. Enough lives could be different balancing on this insignificant word.

She slowly glances up at the kitchen clock which reads 3:25. Ay dios, had she been swimming in the pools of her thoughts for that long. She quickly got up from the couch and took one look at her son to make sure he was alright and then slowly walked upstairs to try and get a few hours of sleep. But as she climbs into bed, her mind is still keeping her awake as usual. Past incidents quickly flash through her mind again.

She now recalled the day when she gave birth to her so troubled hijo. She was 20 and very frightened. Her mother had died when she was eight and she had no knowledge of what to expect. She was afraid and suspicious of hospitals. She remembers when the doctor tried to examine her how she had turned away ashamed. She would never get used to the idea of a strange man examining her. So she waited at home for the last final moment when the baby had finally demanded life. She doesn't remember the pain after birth, only the thankful relief that came when the pain was over. She had given birth to a healthy child, her hijo.

Suddenly and without warning, the woman begins to cry. First her sobs come out in slow moans and then they get louder and out of control. Her husband quickly awakes and says, "Vieja, que tienes? Que te duele?" The woman's response is a new flow of tears. Now her viejo is scared. His woman has never cried in front of him before. She had always been strong. But now this woman with whom he has been married 25 years puzzles him. He looks to her for some answers. He has never been particularly gentle or romantic towards her in the past. He had been brought up to believe that a woman was there only to serve her man. He had been taught by his father that one should not pamper or spoil a woman. Give her just enough of what was required, that was what he believed. He didn't know how to act in any other way.

Now he was in this peculiar situation which he hadn't expected. His woman had never broken down to him. Her quiet strength, even though he would never admit it to her, was much stronger than his. While her vulnerability touched him deeply, still he was frightened that she should act like this.

Again he asked, "Vieja, que te duele?". But it was now said more tenderly.

It took the woman a while to catch her breath, but finally she began to unload some of the heavy burdens she held upon her breast. She quietly began, "Viejo, what has happened to our life, my life? Sometimes I feel that I don't even have a life of my own. I am like a concrete structure whose only purpose in life is to serve. What little love we had in the beginning has now diluted into a mere commitment that neither of us can break even if we wanted to. I have always tried to be a dutiful wife to you. I have always been there when you needed me. Care and serve, yes, that has been my life's only goal. I am not trying to be humble my husband, only truthful. The reason I cry now is because of the troubles I see in my son. He and I are both experiencing the same fears. He is lost and I who have always helped him, can no longer do so. He no longer has use for his mama and I weep for myself because of this. I have always been a mama or wife. I have never been a woman first. My daughters come to me asking questions that I know nothing about. They ask me of advice on life and I realize that they know more of life than I. Can't you see, hombre, what I am trying to say? I can't blame you for this because it is not your fault. It is the combination of our times, you, me, life. All these factors made my life what it is now". Before she could continue to explain her inner thoughts aloud, her husband quickly interjects,

"Mujer, are you saying that out of 25 years of life together, you have never had special moments to reflect upon? Have I been such a cruel husband? I took you from your broken home to our home. I have always cared for you and confided in you. You of all people know more about me than I know of myself. I have cared for you as a husband should care for a wife. I have always tried to be a dutiful husband and strict father as it should be. I treat you as my father treated my mother. She never complained, never. Why do you dare to do so now? Have you been talking to those comadronas down the street? Have they been the metiches who have been filling your head with such foolish and irresponsible ideas. Speak woman, I want your answer".

The woman, still unsure of her thoughts, hesitated and then finally answered, "Viejo, I care for you and our family very much, but a person can come to the point where the love becomes so great it chokes you. My family has been the center of life. I know very little of anything of life outside the home. I am 46 and I have not experienced anything outside of my family. Soon I will become an old woman and I already feel that I have been cheated. Life is swiftly passing me by and I must catch up to it. Ay hombre, I must begin to look around and open my eyes to everything around me. To attend one of those meetings at our hija's school would not seem much to you or anybody, but to me it would be a chance to interact with different people. I must slowly awake my inner self to outside surroundings. If I want your respect as a person rather than as a dutiful wife,

I must learn to respect myself. Maybe by experiencing life more fully, I can accomplish this. I will need your help my husband, in reaching these goals".

The room was quiet. She had finished. She watched her husband who had been quiet for the last hour and waited for a reaction from him. He was lost for words and didn't know what to answer. Part of him wanted to reach out and touch her and tell her that he understood what she was going through. Another side of him was confused and indignant. He felt that a woman had no right to put such demands on her husband. So all he could do was stare dumbfoundedly.

The woman smiled knowingly and was happy that she had confused her husband. It was a good sign. Maybe somehow he would agree with her when he finally weighed her remarks honestly and openly. This conversation would long dwell in both their minds and the thought of it made her content. She put her hand on her husband's shoulder and told him it was best that they now try to sleep. Tomorrow was another day. He mutely agreed and turned over on his side still puzzled at what had taken place. She too, curled up on her side of the bed and fell to sleep instantly.

The End

The class assignment was for the students to assume the personality of a person most unlike themselves and to write a creative essay as if they were that person. This student has a little boy...How delightfully she shares with us his world!

Mom, I told the kids that my dad is a fireman. He is, isn't he?

Mom isn't such a bad playmate. She doesn't wrestle or play catch as well as Uncle Paul. Uncle Paul is going to take me to a baseball game. Just him and me. Wait till I tell the kids.

And just wait until I tell them that Uncle Eddie took me fishing. I won't tell them I didn't catch any fish. Uncle Eddie said it was because I couldn't sit still long enough and that I scared the fish away.

Everybody yells at me because I can't sit still. How can I tell them that there is just too much to see and do. I want to be like the rabbit in the story that mom read to me. The farmer locked him in a cage so he couldn't move, but that smart rabbit got out and ate all the carrots in the garden. Mom said I am kind of like that rabbit because one night she made me go to bed for being ornery again. When she wasn't looking I took the bag of cookies from the kitchen. Well, she made me go to bed without dinner and I was hungry and I don't mind sleeping on sheets with chocolate stains. What the heck, they're only sheets and mom doesn't mind washing them. I guess she does mind, because she was really mad.

But she's not mad all the time. We laugh a lot and play checkers and she reads to me. I'm going to have to tell mom to get me some more books. I already know what she's going to say before she reads it.

Yeah, mom's okay, but Uncle Paul and Uncle Eddie...Well, it's them I like being around.

Rosa Wood

## A Tribute to Chicano Parents

by

Ricardo Salinas

Dear Father and Mother,

There was a time when I was embarrassed because you had an accent, and because your clothes had that green tint of the orchards and fields and the smell of soil. You had the sweat of laborers.

I was embarrassed because we used to live in run-down shacks and sometimes ragged tents. I was even ashamed of the food we ate, tacos, frijoles, tortillas and chile picoso. I was even ashamed of your complexion, of your ways, of your looks. I was ashamed because I thought all of those things were your fault.

But then, the truth surfaced from beneath a sea of lies, injustices, discrimination and oppression. And I realized, it was not your fault at all.

The circumstances were designed by many who preached Christianity and never practiced it. Designed by those who claimed that the strong should help the weak and did just the opposite. They were the same who slayed the buffalo to extinction, uprooted nature for gold and who are now demanding ecology. Proclaimed by those who wrote an egalitarian constitution never intending it for us.

They broke every commandment of their own religion because of their greed for someone else's property, and those who made treaties and promises and then never honored them. They were the same as those who brought disease, oppression and the seeds of hate to our continent.

I didn't know that your life had been channeled into what you had become. I didn't know I was being programmed into the same. Thanks to the young braves who stood up to these forces. First there were the "pachucos", then the "batos locos", the veterans, and now, Chicanos. They showed us the way to pride, determination and courage.

Now that I too am a Chicano, I can see the truth. You possessed beauty in its true form because you were sincere, honest and nurtured nature, not destroyed it. Now I am proud of you because through your sweat and labor, America was built.

Yes, you helped build this country. Its many buildings, railroads, bridges, schools were built by Mexicans. They were built by fathers like you with the latent talent of ancestors who had built pyramids. The proof is in San Jose, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Santa Fe, San Antonio and many more cities. But your reward was little.

You helped feed America and other countries with your labor in the fields and orchards. You, other fathers, sons, brothers, uncles defended our country in wars with unequalled bravery. Yet, your love of country was often questioned.

a tribute to chicano parents...cont.

I can understand your frustrations. I understand father, why so many times you come home drunk. Sometimes you bore your sadness as a man and other times, why I saw tears in your eyes. Chicana mothers and sisters were there with you, always faithful and pure.

So, Chicano mothers and fathers, please forgive us for our misunderstanding. Rest now my dear old ones for I will continue the fight, the labors, the efforts **for a true Democracy.**

To our mothers and fathers who have passed away, I respectively place a multi-colored wreath on your grave because you now live beyond the stars.

Respectfully,

Chicano sons and daughters

#### El Ver Es Aprender

El ver es aprender.  
To know the ground is firme  
for you to stand on it.  
Calo, calo is only a mirage.  
Be brave and dare to stand on it.  
Behind is partial darkness.  
If chale is what you are saying,  
Carnal yo tengo escame but  
perhaps the step is strong  
El ver es aprender.

Oscar Gallardo





