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Indigenous Peoples of the Americas: Roots, Resistance and Resurgence

Exhibition Statement, Salvador Guereña, CEMA Director

This exhibition explores Indigenous heritages and identity, and their modes of cultural and political representation. Taking a transnational and interdisciplinary approach, it also examines the spiritual wisdom rooted in the practices of ancient Indigenous civilizations.

A central theme of the exhibition is the resurgence, resistance, and growth of the Chumash community, whose culture embraces the protection of the natural world and oceans that are sacred to Indigenous peoples and vital to the survival of humankind. The UCSB Mesa was once the home of the Heli'yuk Chumash village, one of the most densely populated areas in precolonial North America.

The *tomol*, the traditional Chumash canoe, is a symbol of resurgence and in this exhibition serves as a visual metaphor for Indigenous peoples' struggles for self-determination. Indigenous spiritual healing involves the four directions and the key elements of fire, water, land, and air. The annual ceremonial tomol crossings of the Santa Barbara Channel are a powerful example of re-establishing community and contributing to the healing process through cultural activities and practices in contemporary times.

Indigenous healing is included in the exhibition through the traditional uses of medicinal plants and scientific inquiry in the field of ethnobotany, such as research on the use of medicinal plants by Yeukwana, Piaroa, and Hoti Indian tribes in the Venezuelan state of Amazonas.



Gallery photograph of entrance to exhibit.

The exhibition includes both ancient and modern objects. Pre-Columbian artifacts and facsimiles of ancient codices point us to the origins of Native peoples in the Americas. Examples of contemporary graphic art, literature, and theater show how artists and authors have been inspired and influenced by Mesoamerican cultures.

The dichotomy of struggles and accomplishments is evoked through movements for social justice and self-determination, as well as through expressions of cultural affirmation. The exhibition recognizes resistance movements, such as those involving the women leaders of the Zapatista National Liberation Army of Chiapas, Mexico. Contemporary artwork such as Leo Limón's "Dando Gracias" (giving thanks) memorializes and pays tribute to Mesoamerican ancestors.

See online exhibit:

<http://guides.library.ucsb.edu/indigenous>

Mesoamerican Roots

Artifacts from Pre-Hispanic Mesoamerican culture were included with the intent of providing a greater appreciation of the cultural resurgence of Mesoamerican iconography, symbols and motifs displayed in this exhibition.

The Formative period dating from 2000 B.C. to A.D. 200 is also referred to as the Preclassic era in Mesoamerican history. From that time through the present, Indigenous peoples have lived in a wide variety of community types.

Clan-based communities were often seasonally nomadic or permanently resident in one locale with very rich resources. Especially at estuaries, villages had good nutrition year-round through access to the ocean, the rivers, and the piedmont zone (the bases of mountains). Early Formative period residents of what would become known as the “Olmec” region along the Gulf Coast of Mexico, for example, might find the specific flavors of local foods to be different if they visited the Chumash of the California Central Coast, but the lifestyles and interactions with local environments would have been familiar.

A hallmark of these Formative period Indigenous communities was their reliance on local, sustainable agri-

cultural and hunting practices. They traded material artifacts on a regular basis between regions, even though each community relied on its own territory for nourishment. Archaeologists refer to these now as “interaction spheres” to reflect the fact that knowledge, customs, ideas, and even religions were traded between communities in a broad region along with the “artifacts” we dig out of the ground.

The artifacts in this exhibit reflect interaction spheres across time and space, anchored to Mesoamerica—in this case specifically, these can cross long periods of time. Artifacts from the Formative period in Guerrero, for example, have been found in Aztec caches from the Late Postclassic, 1,500 years later.

Respect for these ancient artifacts by Aztec ritual specialists reflects a value of different Indigenous traditions and their use in new social settings and economies. The way that Chican@s appreciated and retained Aztec and other Mesoamerican artifacts and artwork is not very different from the ways they were previously appropriated within and across indigenous cultures for millennia.

everyday life survives erosion and/or decay. Accordingly, interpretations have changed substantially since the early 20th century, and even today scholars don't often agree.



MEZCALA STONE FIGURINE

The Balsas River in the modern Mexican state of Guerrero was the home of the Mezcala culture, which flourished from 700 BC to AD 500 (or ending about 1000 years before the Aztecs rose to power). Mezcala artists sculpted these abstract human forms using "greenstone" they quarried from local mines. The style reflects interaction with Gulf Coast Olmec communities, who found substantial interest in ritual artifacts made of these materials even though they had to trade for them. Olmec interest in greenstone tied the artifacts to communities and development throughout Mesoamerica during the early Formative period.

Archeologists have been investigating ancient cultures in Mesoamerica for over 100 years. The interested student, however, should be warned to take into account that the archeological record is very limited. Very little from



STONE JAGUAR

The jaguar was an important symbol throughout Mesoamerica and once had a range from Arizona into South America. Mesoamerican cosmology included three main communities divided somewhat by level. The Underworld was everything (and everyone) below the surface of the earth; the earthly realm was between the floral canopy of the highest trees and the surface of the earth; and the Sky was everything (and everyone) above the highest tree-tops. The jaguar was a symbol of power and the night, and so served as a "ruler" of the earthly realm.



GREENSTONE RING

This greenstone ring was certainly carved to represent a bird of prey, but its secure identification is a bit ambiguous. Most likely it was intended to be the head of a harpy eagle, which in Mesoamerican art has occasionally been confused with representations of owls. At the top of the food chain, the harpy eagle was for the sky what the jaguar was for the terrestrial realm. It was probably worn by the ruler of a Mesoamerican city.



TLATILCO STYLE CERAMIC FIGURINE

Small clay figurines are some of the most common artifacts found. Where luxury items (like jade necklaces) reflected trade over long distances and sizeable class distinctions within society, clay figurines represented the opposite. They were probably used in domestic rituals, commemorating ancestors or deceased family members. This figurine is from the Valley of Mexico, Pre-Classic era.



AZTEC STYLE CERAMIC FIGURINE

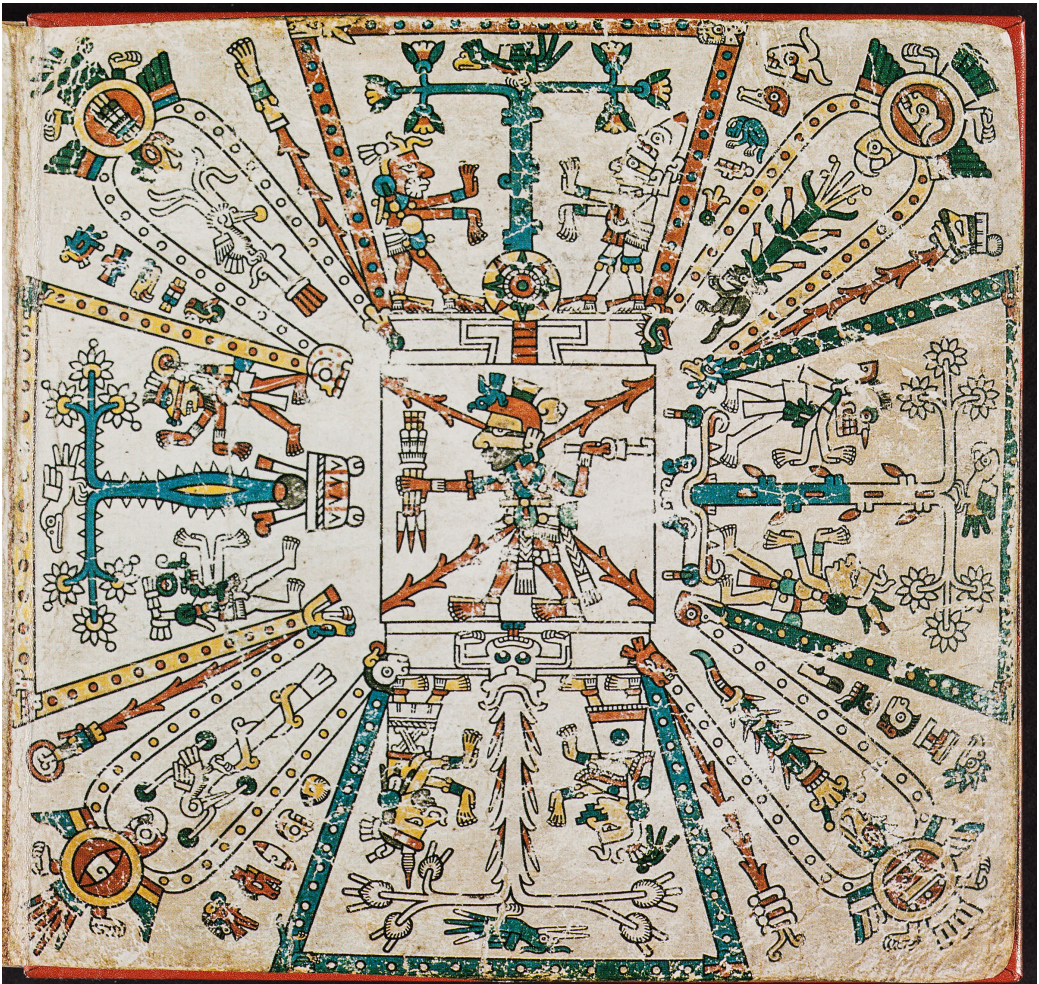
Identifiable as a warrior by the shield he carries in his right hand, the depiction is unorthodox because left-handed warriors are statistically less common than right-handed ones. This might call the piece's authenticity into question; unfortunately, since it was acquired from a private collection, all of its provenance information has been lost. On the other hand, we can see that the figure represents a well-off member of society. He wears ear spools, which were probably made of greenstone or obsidian. He also wears a collar, possibly reflecting a decorated textile. His headdress, too, would mark him as having a higher rank.

Codices

“Codex” is a word used to describe a hand-written manuscript, so most of the books written before the invention of the printing press are “codices.” Very

few of the codices written by scribes in Mesoamerica have survived into modern times; those that did are in private collections, mainly in Europe. Because these were re-discovered before modern scholars had deciphered the writing systems in them, most of the codices are known by the city in which they were held, or by the name of their owners. Several facsimiles of codices are displayed here. The Mayan Dresden Codex (from Dresden, Germany) and the Codex Féjervary-Mayer (from 19th-century owners Gabriel Fejervárý and Joseph Mayer) are two such examples.

The Codex Azoyú, on the other hand, was found still in possession of an Indigenous community in 1940. “Negotiations” with the Mexican government resulted in the codex being named after the town, Azoyú, and it was moved to reside in the national library. This codex gives the history of the town of Tlapa-Tlachinollan in the mountains of Guerrero, naming two of its earliest rulers as “Bandera de Plumas de Quetzal” and “Serpiente Preciosa que Brilla.” The book was written to keep track of the head lineage and the major events undertaken by its members.



FRONTISPIECE OF THE CODIX FEJERVARY-MAYER (AZTEC)

The front page of this codex, written around the same time as the Dresden Codex, provides a “cosmogram,” or a conceptualization of Mesoamerican space-time. The 260-Day calendric count traces out time with the dots along the cross path that forms the shape of the overall illustration. The four “lobes” around the central square encircle the four cosmic regions: East at the top, North at the left, West at the bottom, and South at the right. The central figure is Xiuhtecuhtli in the

Aztec tradition; the other figures in each cosmic region are the Yohualteuctin (“Lords of the Night”). Each pair is responsible for one-quarter of the 260-day period. The completion of the entire period is the point at which the central figure generates the omen for that cycle. Aztec priests used these books to determine the appropriate ceremonies to perform in response to the events (natural, political, economic) of their times.



DRESDEN CODEX PAGE 47

The Dresden Codex is a screen-fold manuscript written in Mayan hieroglyphs during the Late Postclassic period in Yucatan. It played a critical role in the modern decipherment of the hieroglyphic writing system, and demonstrated that the astronomers of their time had accurate models for following eclipse cycles and Venus' motions.

Now that we can read the glyphs, we find that the text on this page describes the same conceptualization of space and time as the front page of the Codex Féjérvary-Mayer. The text states that Venus and four different companions are responsible for the four sub-periods of a Venus synodic period. The image on the right is the warrior deity who generates an omen at the completion of the full Venus Round of 584 days. The figure at the bottom is the warrior's victim, and the figure at the top is Venus' companion in the East. Intriguingly, the warrior figure here is Xiuhtecuhtli—like in the Codex Féjérvary-Mayer—but his name is 'translated' into Mayan as Chak Xiwite.

Chumash Cultural Preservation & the Environment

The Chumash history is its people's responsibility. Inherent in the revival of the tomol society are cultural and environmental preservation through positive activism, community-building, and recognition of our Native American relatives to the South, to the North, and to the East. Like all Native peoples, the Chumash suffered from policies that promoted eradication by force, religion, and disease.

The tomol society and cultural practices have brought about a rise in the Chumash community's political influence, economic sustainability, and educational and social status. We are rebuilding our villages and protecting our culture. We work to restore our sacred places, language, and our knowledge of native plants and their uses. We use our shared history to educate ourselves and the non-native community to remember our ancestors and to never lose our Chumash voice again.

We as Chumash elders encourage our youth and community members to remember our ancestors. Together, we have fun being involved in activities such as regalia classes, storytelling, and cultural crafts at gatherings. Our youth really enjoy it. We also have the intertribal singers that enjoy singing at Chumash gatherings and broader community events. We encourage our youth to speak at least a few words of Smuwich, our native language, each time we meet to assist in our language skills. We are proud of our culture and perpetuating the history of our people.

Martha Cordero Jaimes, Chumash Elder



THE TOMOL (Photo by Robert Schwemmer)

The awakening of the Chumash tomol (traditional plank canoe) offers a vision and hope for the past, present, and future of Chumash people. The resurgence of the tomol society has filled the Chumash people with a renewed sense of pride in and responsibility for their relationship with the ocean and the islands. It has provided a practical way to unite Native voices that call for the protection of maritime culture and the ocean and islands from which the tomol tradition was born.

For over 13,000 years the Chumash people have co-existed with the marine environment and practiced their life ways traveling the ocean's open waters in the (Santa Barbara) channel. By the 19th century, the tomol society practices were forbidden by the U.S. government. Academics studied our old ways. But now Chumash people have taken ownership of their own history. The tomol society has once again become a university in and of itself. The tomol is a symbol of cultural continuity, connecting us to our ancestors. Traditionally, tomols were built and paddled for commerce, trade, and transportation. Today, building a tomol provides a gathering place for ceremony

and cultural practices of the past, bringing our ancestors with us into the future.

The people are building their own tomols, their own canoes. And it's a new experience. Even though they supported the birthing, the building of all our previous canoes, they were still managed by non-native people. That is no longer true today. Today, Chumash people dream it, build it, birth it and are with it. There is no good or bad, right or wrong in it. They are just taking responsibility for it.

Ray Ward, Chumash Tomol Builder and Chair of the Chumash Maritime Association

natural world. Mountains, birds, snakes, water, people, animals, fire, lightning, and insects are common patterns.



WOMEN IN THE TOMOL
(photo by Chumash Maritime Association)

The 2008 Tomol Channel Crossing included women paddlers. Left to right: Maura Sullivan, Liz Morello, Lacey Lopez, Isabel Morello and Toni Cordero.



BASKET HAT
(contemporary; made by Alicia Cordero)

Basket hats in this geographic area have a flat top and flared sides, and are made mostly from a reed called *mexme'y*, which is woven using a "coiling" technique. A basket hat is worn by women for beauty, showcasing their skills as weavers and displaying patterns that either tell a story or reflect the



HELEK TOMOL (1976)

Brotherhood of the Tomol: White Bear (Sulwasunaytset), Joe Estrada (Thot), Slo'w (Victor Gutierrez), John Ruiz (Thot Hokanay-oh), Kote Lotah, Frank Gutierrez (Kuic) and Pat Guterrez around the Helek.



ELYE'WUN TOMOL (Photo by Chumash Maritime Association, 2001)

A moment of celebration. The Elye'wun with paddlers. Reggie Pagaling, Luis Ramirez, Roberta Cordero, Wonono Rubio, Alan Salazar, and Marcus Lopez salute greeters on the beach. Stearns Wharf is in the background.



BAILING BASKET
(Contemporary, loaned by Timara Lotah Link)

A bailing basket is used by tomol paddlers to bail seawater out of the boat.

A weaver gathers a slim, flexible reed called *esmu* and weaves the green stems into a bowl-shaped basket using a twining technique called “open weave.” When the basket is done, it is placed in the sun to dry and harden. Then natural tar (*woqo*) and pine pitch (*tspul*) are gathered and cooked together. The basket is dipped very quickly into the tar/pitch mixture and then dunked in water to cool. The result is a basket coated in tar that is watertight.



CHUMASH CHILDREN IN REGALIA (Photo by Wishtoyo Foundation)

Great grandchildren of Chumash Elder Grace Pacheco (Romero) in regalia participating in cultural practices, and

the traditions of their ancestors. This generation has not known a time without their tomol and culture.

Indigenous Healing & Traditional Medicine



WHITE AND GRANDFATHER SAGE
(Contemporary, loaned by Wishtoyo
Chumash Discovery Village)

The medicinal plant bundle is made up of white sage, mugwort, and sagebrush, and sits in a red abalone shell. This accompaniment is used for purification of people, items, and space before a ceremony. The plant medicines are traditionally used for purification, dreamtime, teas, and sweat lodge. The abalone is used for food, medicine bowls, fishhooks, tools, and adornment for regalia and jewelry.



COPAL
(Contemporary, loaned by Anita Campeon)

(Nahuatl: *copalli*) The resin from the copal tree has been used in Mesoamerica for thousands of years. Commonly, the sap is harvested when

the tree trunk “weeps.” It can also be released by humans making incisions on the trunk. The uses of copal are many, including ceremonial cleansing of the individual and/or the home; cleansing of ritual spaces and objects; and divination and healing of illness. Most traditional ceremonies incorporate copal smoke. The Sahumador (Nahuatl: *Popochcomitl*) is the sacred vessel in which the copal resin is burned on a bed of wood or charcoal. A lit Sahumador is considered to embody the four elements:

- Water = the copal itself
- Earth = the ceramic vessel
- Air = that which feeds the fire
- Fire = the burning wood or charcoal



MEXICAN MEDICINAL PLANTS
(Clockwise from left):
Flor de Jamaica (*Hibiscus sabdariffa*)
Gordolobo (*Gnaphalium obtusifolium*)
Pasiflora (*Passiflora Incarnata* L.)
Chile de Arbol (*Capsicum annum* L.)

Flor de Jamaica (*Hibiscus sabdariffa*) The Hibiscus flower is originally from Angola but is now found throughout tropical and subtropical areas. Medicinal uses include blood pressure and cholesterol maintenance; treatment for loss of appetite, colds, heart and

nerve diseases, upper respiratory tract pain, and swelling; and as a diuretic to counter fluid retention. It has been used for stomach irritation and circulation disorders; and as a gentle laxative.

Gordolobo (*Gnaphalium obtusifolium*)
Native to Central and Northern Mexico, Gordolobo has been used for hundreds of years in Mexico and other Latin American countries, mainly to expel phlegm (mucus), and to treat bronchial asthma and coughs. Tea made from Gordolobo has been used to relieve gastrointestinal discomfort. The tea has also been used as a poultice to reduce hemorrhoids.

Pasiflora (*Passiflora Incarnata L.*)
Native to the tropics and the subtropics of the Americas, the passion flower vine (plant and flowers) has been in medicinal use since pre-Hispanic times. It has been used to treat sleep problems (insomnia), gastrointestinal upset related to anxiety or nervousness, generalized anxiety disorder, and symptoms related to narcotic drug withdrawal. Passion flower also has been used for seizures, hysteria, asthma, symptoms of menopause, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), nervousness and excitability, palpitations, irregular heartbeat, high blood pressure, fibromyalgia, hemorrhoids, burns, and pain relief.

Chile de Arbol (*Capsicum annum L.*)
The medicinal uses of chiles in the New World date to the pre-Hispanic period. Diego Alvarez Chanca, a physician on Columbus' second voyage to the West Indies in 1493, described their extensive medical use in 1494. They are a rich source of vitamins A and C. Capsaicin, the active ingredient in chiles, is used as

an antioxidant and pain-reliever. It is understood to have anti-inflammatory properties that can provide relief to those with arthritis, and an overall beneficial effect on the cardiovascular system.



CHUMASH MEDICINAL PLANTS

(Clockwise from left):

Hummingbird Sage (*Salvia spathacea*)

Swamp Root, Yerba Mansa

(*Anemopsis californica*)

California Bay Laurel

(*Umbellularia californica*)

Indian Tobacco (*Nicotiana clevelandii*)

Hummingbird Sage (*Salvia spathacea*)
An oil derived from the leaves was used as a drink or as a bath to treat heart ailments and rheumatism.

Swamp Root, Yerba Mansa
(*Anemopsis californica*)
This plant is found throughout Latin America as well as in Chumash regions. Yerba mansa root tea has been used as a healing wash for cuts, as a blood purifier and as a poultice for rheumatism. Its widespread cultivation attests to its medicinal value.

California Bay Laurel (*Umbellularia californica*)
Chumash people used the wood, leaves, and smoke of bay laurel. Its strong smell was used to attract deer, and to

camouflage human smell. Boiled leaves were used for colds, and leaves mixed with lard were a remedy for headaches.

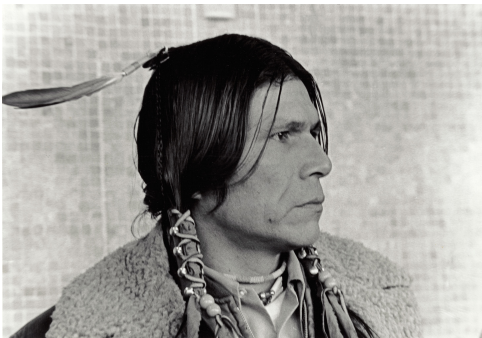
Indian Tobacco

(*Nicotiana clevelandii*)

According to Chumash history, tobacco grew all over Santa Barbara. Tobacco continues to be a significant plant for Indians. It is commonly used in ceremonies and prayers. Chumash made little round balls of tobacco cakes called *pespibata* that were used for making a drink or eating. This drink was part of men's ceremonies that involved vomiting and intoxication. The Chumash also used special pipes for healing with tobacco smoke.

Indigenous Resistance Movements

American Indian Movement Occupation of Alcatraz Island



**AMERICAN INDIAN MOVEMENT
OCCUPATION OF ALCATRAZ**
(Photographs by Michelle Vignes
and Michel Dubois)

Photographs of Russell Means (above) and Dennis Banks (below) are from the Galeria de la Raza's 1983 photo exhibit-

ion, "Images of the American Indian Movement" that commemorated the 10th anniversary of Wounded Knee. Depicted were periods and events such as AIM's occupation of Alcatraz (1968), Wounded Knee (1973), and "The Longest Walk" (1978). The exhibit was sponsored by the International Treaty Council. It culminated in recognizing political prisoners "and those who have given their lives to the struggle of Indian people and Indian land." (*Galeria de la Raza Archives, CEMA 4*)

Zapatistas in Chiapas Mexico

With the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, the value of the peso was deflated in Mexico. Partially in response, the EZLN (Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional or Zapatista Army for National Liberation), gained recognition throughout Mexico and internationally for its armed resistance against capitalism, neoliberalism, and globalization.

The EZLN consisted of at least six different Indigenous communities. It created autonomous towns and cities within the state of Chiapas. The Mexican military responded with violence, forcing the Zapatistas were to retreat from San Cristobal de las Casas, while maintaining autonomous communities throughout southern Chiapas. Important to their international intervention and legacy were the communiqués that they released, such as the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle (2005), which influenced movements for social and

environmental justice that continue to this day.



**FEMALE ZAPATISTA GUERRILLA FIGHTER
IN CHIAPAS**

In the 1994 takeover, women held positions in the military ranks of the EZLN. In the case of the town San Cristóbal de las Casas, Major Ana Maria, who held the highest military rank in her area, led a guerrilla group of both men and women Zapatistas that succeeded in an occupation that lasted almost two weeks. In the First Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle, written collectively by members of the EZLN, the Women Revolutionary Laws was included. This manifesto gives women the right to an education, to be part of the revolutionary struggle, to hold leadership positions if elected, and to choose who they marry. It gives them the right to decide the number of children to give birth to, and the right to punish anyone who attempts to sexually violate them. Another important female figure of the Zapatistas was the late Comandanta Ramona, who was part of the eventual peace talks between the Mexican government and the EZLN. (*Galeria de la Raza Archives, CEMA 4*)



"MARCOS SOMOS TODOS"

From the first days of the armed uprising, Subcomandante Marcos stood out as the most visible figure of the movement, serving as a bridge between the Zapatista Indigenous communities and the world. From the beginning, however, he made explicit that he was a *sub*-comandante because the indigenous Mayan leadership council was the authority for the EZLN.

The name, EZLN, honored the 19th-century Mexican Revolutionary War leader Emiliano Zapata. They echoed his call for "Tierra y Libertad" ('land and freedom'). The slogan "Marcos Somos Todos" in the exhibit photo of the street banner acknowledges the many Zapatistas, or individuals organizing under Zapatismo, that exist around the world. The Zapatistas have made it clear that their goal is not to have outsiders come to Chiapas and fight "their war" but instead to offer their support to others' struggles for land, housing, food, health care, education, independence, democracy, justice, and peace. (*Galeria de la Raza Archives, CEMA 4*)



**NICARAGUAN GUERRILLA COMMANDER
EDEN PASTOR**

In July 1979, a political movement called the Sandinista National Liberation Front (Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional, or FSLN) succeeded in overthrowing the corrupt regime of Dictator Anastasio Somoza, the last in a long line of brutal dictators who ruled the country since 1937. The Sandinistas were a Marxist socialist party that promised the country economic recovery and improvement of human rights, but they had overlooked the



Daniel del Solar Papers, CEMA 145

Indigenous peoples of the Atlantic Coast. The latter formed a group called the MISURASATA (Miskito, Sumu, Rama, Sandinista Asla Takanka). The conflict was complicated by U.S. support for the Contras against the Sandinistas. After much turmoil, the Miskito reached an accord with the Sandinistas, and they evolved into a strong political presence in their communities. (65 *Daniel del Solar Papers, CEMA 145*)



CLETA DEMONSTRATIONS AT THE EL TAJÍN RUINS, VERACRUZ, MEXICO
(Photograph by Daniel del Solar)

Photograph of a protest demonstration by members of the political and cultural organization CLETA (Cultura, Pedagogía, Medios Libre, Arte, Teatro para la Liberación) at the ruins of El Tajín, in Veracruz Mexico. This is a pre-Columbian archaeological zone that in 1992 became designated as a World Heritage Site. This photo was taken in

the early 1970s depicting a CLETA demonstration for an “anti-Imperialist culture for our exploited America.” CLETA participants appropriated the site to promote their progressive political agenda, including Indigenous dancing and theater performances. (*Daniel del Solar Papers, CEMA 145*)

Chicano/Latino Literature & Theatre

Aztlán the Mythic Homeland

An important iconic element within the Chicano political and artistic movement was the concept of “Aztlán.” Defined as the mythic homeland of the Aztecs before they set off to found Tenochtitlan (present Mexico City) during the Chicano Movement, Aztlán became synonymous with the United States Southwest and Chicana/o nationalism. As a unifying concept, it proved more binding than language, birthplace, or cultural traits, especially since these were not all shared attributes. Aztlán and its indigenous imagery represented the unifying force of an ancient heritage based on spiritual principles and a physical entity (the Southwest). More important, Aztlán also came to embody the affirmation of Chicanas/os’ mestizo origins as the product of Spanish and Indigenous peoples of this continent.

Tere Romo, “Points of Convergence: the iconography of the Chicano poster,” in *¿Just Another Poster? Chicano Graphic Arts in California*. University of California, Santa Barbara. University Art Museum, 2001.



ALBERTO BALTAZAR URISTA

Alberto Baltazar Urista is a renowned figure in the Chicano literary world. Under the pen name Alurista he compiled several collections of poetry, including the acclaimed *Floriscanto en Aztlán* published in 1971, which served to make Chicano literature an essential element of national cultural consciousness. He is an active educator of Chicana/o and pre-Columbian literature and culture, creative writing, and Spanish with an interest in Mesoamerican knowledge and experience. Alurista is also an accomplished activist responsible for co-founding El Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA) chapter at San Diego State University as well as the campus’ Chicana/o Studies department. (*Photograph from the Alurista Papers, CEMA 21*)



**“LA VIRGEN DEL TEPEYAC”
EL TEATRO CAMPESINO (1986)**

This photo is from the play titled *La Virgen del Tepeyac* produced by El Teatro Campesino. This play is a clear reflection of Spanish colonization and some of its effects for Indigenous peoples. The production dramatizes the four apparitions of the Virgen de Guadalupe to Juan Diego, an Indigenous man in México in the year 1531. This production, written by Luis Valdez, is significant because it highlights the joining of some of México’s Indigenous peoples to the Catholic Church through the story of El Indio Juan Diego, who becomes the messenger for La Virgen. This play rises above language barriers by incorporating English, Spanish and Nahuatl, the latter being the ancestral language of the Aztecs. The spiritually rich production is one that is frequented by hundreds in the audience every year making it one of Valdez’s most popular works. (*El Teatro Campesino Archives (CEMA 5)*)



**“LA CONQUISTA DE MÉXICO” EL TEATRO
CAMPESINO (Photograph by George Ballis)**

This photograph (circa 1968) is an example of how El Teatro Campesino uses Indigenous images to tell the Chicana/o story. The production is titled *La Conquista de México* and stages the Aztec Calendar or Sun Stone image as the central component of the play. The face in the middle of the Aztec Calendar is a live actor who narrates the production saying this is a theater for “the farm workers of Aztlán” and for “la tierra.” Thus, he literally brings this Aztec history to life again and connects those roots to the Chicana/o community. The production focuses on many injustices facing the Chicana/o community in the 1960s. For example, the enlivened sun deity speaks out against the Vietnam War and voices support for Chicana/o farm workers. The farm workers have been a community greatly misrepresented and often ignored. Because of this, *La Conquista de México* shows the historical injustices along with the contemporary ones. (*El Teatro Campesino Archives, CEMA 5*)

**Contemporary Chicana/o,
Latina/o Graphic Art**



CRUISING TURTLE ISLAND
(Gilbert Luján, 1986)

Gilbert Luján, commonly known as “Magú,” was one of the founders of the famous Chicano art collective called ‘Los Four.’ The work he conducted with Los Four helped to establish the themes of the Chicano art movement, one of which was the central component of Indigenous identity for Chicanas/os.

In *Cruising Turtle Island* the artist merges Indigenous roots with modern Chicano culture by placing an Aztec warrior behind the wheel of a Chicano lowrider, its shell becomes the land base

of the Americas. Luján’s Aztec warrior lowrider. Luján draws on the Indigenous narrative of Turtle Island, which tells an origin story of the Americas. In this story, a turtle emerges from a mass of water to save a woman falling from the sky. When the turtle then cruises around the outer edges of the turtle shell to claim his Indigenous identity and to depict the land in relationship with Indigenous peoples. (*Self Help Graphics & Art Archives, CEMA 3*)



CHUPAROSA (Alma Lopez, 2002)

Alma Lopez, a UCSB alumna, digital artist, lecturer and writer, is an accomplished Chicana feminist lesbian artist whose works has been exhibited internationally. Born in Mexico and raised in Los Angeles, Lopez blends Mesoamerican hieroglyphics and edgy personal references in her art that have included controversial depictions of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Her work also expresses her sexuality, as seen in this depiction of her lover in the silk-screen print 'Chuparosa' (Hummingbird). The hummingbird is associated with Indigenous mythology. (*Self Help Graphics & Art archives, CEMA 3*)



**VICTORIA OCELOTL
(Yreina Cervantez, 1983)**

Yreina Cervantez was born in 1952 and raised near San Diego, California, close to a Native American reservation. As a Chicana artist, she has been producing art for over 35 years, with watercolor as her strongest medium. This print, 'Victoria Ocelotl' (Jaguar Victory), was first printed at Self Help Graphics in the Atelier printmaking program. Here, the artist depicts her solidarity with Mayans in Guatemala who were experiencing violence and genocide at the hands of their government and sponsorship U.S. military. She portrays the Indigenous concept of duality in the print, showing the violence of military force through the image of the helicopter as well as the counter foregrounded image of the Indigenous woman with two jaguars on her shawl. Cervantez suggests that military violence can be subdued by reclaiming the agency and power of Indigenous women and spirituality

since the jaguar also represents spiritual transformation. (*Self Help Graphics & Art Archives, CEMA 3*)



CIHUALYAOMIQUIZ, THE JAGUAR
(Laura Molina, 2003)

Laura Molina is a Chicana painter, sculptor, and comic book author. Much of her work represents the significant artistic contributions of Chicanas, and Chicana feminists. This print is part of her self-published comic book titled 'Cihualyaomiquiz, The Jaguar,' in which she creates the Jaguar Woman superheroine to fight against racism and sexism. The woman in the comic book is a double character who toggles between her role as Linda Rivera, a law scholar, and the Jaguar Woman, a social justice superheroine. Molina uses the medium of the comic book to display the importance of the jaguar to Mesoamerican culture. The jaguar, the largest cat found in the Americas, is fast and aggressive, and many Indigenous peoples call on this animal for spiritual

protection. Since Molina's jaguar figure is also a woman, she shows the strength of Chicanas and how they affirm their Indigenous roots as part of their present identity and struggle for social justice. (*Self Help Graphics & Art Archives, CEMA 3*)



DANDO GRACIAS (Leo Limon, 1983)

Leo Limon is a formative member of the early Chicano art movement. In 1980 he joined Self Help Graphics, a very influential East Los Angeles cultural arts center where he helped found the Atelier printmaking program. 'Dando Gracias' was the first print Limon produced in that program. The print portrays Limon's vision of a Chicana/o Indigenous cultural and spiritual legacy. At the bottom of the print, a Mesoamerican woman gives thanks to la luna (the moon) with an offering of three fruits and a flowering cactus. The

nopal (cactus) is an important element in this print because it has often been a symbol of indigeneity in the Chicana/o community and throughout Mexico. Even though Limon worked directly with a Franciscan nun by the name of Karen Bocalero at Self Help Graphics, he consistently depicted Indigenous spiritual elements in his prints and Dando Gracias is one of the most evident to centralize this theme. (*Self Help Graphics & Art Archives, CEMA 3*)

(Below) In this 1999 print, Yreina Cervantez emphasizes the importance of women in México. The title of this image, *Mujer de Mucha Enagua, Pa' Ti Chicana*, can be translated into two parts. The first phrase is a common saying in México that means “woman

with a lot of petticoat,” which emphasizes revolutionary women with strength and courage. The second part is a dedication artist to Chicanas as it translates “for you Chicana.” The three main figures in this print are a young rebel Zapatista mother with her children (far left), 17th-century Mexican poet Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (far right), and Sor Juana wearing an image around her neck of the contemporary Mexican poet Rosario Castellano from Chiapas. These figures together represent empowered women throughout México’s history deeply driven by Indigenous perspectives. The hand in the middle of the print shows the Indigenous spiral symbol that represents indigeneity as timeless. The backdrop of the print is a jaguar pelt. (*Self Help Graphics & Art Archives, CEMA 3*)



MUJER DE MUCHA ENAGUA, PA' TI CHICANA (Yreina Cervantez, 1999)

Consuelo Méndez Castillo is a Venezuelan painter and muralist. In 1971 she attended the San Francisco Art Institute and met three Chicana artists who together formed the Mujeres Muralistas (Women Muralists). The group was active from 1974–1976 in Northern California. This print by Méndez Castillo, 'Indiecito Venezolano,' depicts a young Indigenous Venezuelan boy with his traditional red face paint. The face paint, called annatto, is obtained from a tropical fruit pulp with red-orange seeds. Méndez Castillo portrays this boy

at a time in Venezuelan history when Indigenous peoples were not well supported or represented in the country. They had been exploited for centuries with Spanish colonization, and more specifically, in the 20th century by European and United States oil corporations. The young Indigenous boy looks out sternly from this print to show that Indigenous Venezuelans are still present and thriving while remaining tied to their traditional roots. (*Rupert Garcia and Sammi Madison Garcia Collection, CEMA 101*)



INDIECITO VENEZOLANO
(Consuelo Méndez Castillo, 1974)



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