

## Teatro Chicana Offers Personal Look at History of Chicana Acting, Theater, Struggle, and Triumphs

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Jan Jennings

"As Chicanas in teatro we battled and explored to find out why and who we were," says Chicana actor and author Felicitas Nuñez. "Chicanas in teatro to us meant knowledge put into an action of love on stage and into life. Through teatro we discovered a world that became our stage."

*Teatro Chicana*, the performance, and *Teatro Chicana*, the soon-to-be-published book, will be presented at 5 p.m. April 17 in the Cross-Cultural Center at the University of California, San Diego. The event is part of UCSD's monthlong celebration honoring labor leader, equal opportunity advocate, and humanitarian César E. Chávez. It is free and open to the public.

The performance event will include readings and a skit by three of the book's authors, Felicitas Nuñez, Delia Rodriguez, and Peggy Garcia, a group talk including questions and answers about the skit, a catered reception, and music by Chunky Sanchez and Ricardo Felix.

The book, *Teatro Chicana - A Collective Memoir and Selected Plays* (University of Texas Press) was written by 17 Chicana actors who participated in the Chicano Movement of the 1970s and 1980s and was edited by Laura E. Garcia, Sandra M. Gutierrez, and Nuñez.

"These memoirs are the personal, honest, and riveting testimonials of 17 Chicanas who performed Chicana theater during the 1970s," writes Rudolfo Anaya, author of *Bless Me, Ultima* and *Curse of the ChupaCabra*. "These carnalas empowered themselves and thousands during the tumultuous years of the Movimiento by performing plays for working-class communities. From college campuses to the fields where campesinos toiled, estas mujeres had the courage to fight gender inequality.

"We need their courage today. And we need their stories for a new generation of Chicanas and for working women everywhere."

Author, editor, and performer Nuñez, who lives in Bermuda Dunes, Ca., was a co-founder of *Teatro de las Chicanas* and continues as a driving force behind the organization. Garcia is the editor of the *Tribuno del Pueblo* newspaper, a bilingual publication that gives voice to the poor and to those fighting unjust laws. She lives in Chicago. Gutierrez, whose home is in Pasadena, is a lifelong community activist who has advocated for immigrant rights, unionization, youth counseling, and cultural diversity.

*Teatro Chicana* tells the story of 17 Chicana actors through chapters featuring the history, as well as the present day, of each of the main actors and writers, and excerpts from the group's background materials and seven of their original short scripts.

"This collection of testimonials of Xicanistas and their work in teatro is an important contribution to the preservation of the spirit and energy that made the Chicano Movement," writes Ana Castillo, author of *The Guardians* and *So Far From God*.

*Teatro Chicana*, the performance, is sponsored by the Center for Iberian and Latin American Studies (CILAS), Chicano/a and Latino/a Arts and Humanities (CLAH), the César E. Chávez Celebration Planning Committee, the UCSD Cross-Cultural Center, Ethnic Studies Department, Literature Department, Women's Center, and Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano/a de Aztlan (MEChA).

For further information on *Teatro Chicana* call the Cross-Cultural Center at (858) 534-9689 or Violeta Gonzales at (858) 822-2021.

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