# EL TALLERCITO DE SON SATX: CREANDO COMUNIDAD A TRAVES DE LA CULTURA

by

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## DEDICATION

*This thesis is dedicated to my madre, Graciela Sanchez Cabunoc Romero, me diste alas para volar. And to my pops, Jerry Stanley Cabunoc. Their blood, sweat, and hard work laid the foundation for all of my successes. This is our thesis madre, pops, this is ours. This work is dedicated to my abuelos, Mamá Chepa and Papá Cruz, I feel you with me siempre. To all my ancestros who came before me, fighting against oppression and injustices, thriving in the face of adversity. Because of your sacrifices, I am living my best life. To my comunidad, El Tallercito de son, y'all are mi familia, and this project would be nothing without all your powerful testimonios. Muchas gracias for embarking on this journey with me, to crear comunidad a través de la cultura.*

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*c/s*

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# EL TALLERCITO DE SON SATX: CREANDO COMUNIDAD A TRAVES DE LA CULTURA

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This research explores Chicanx[1] identity and how *cultura*[2], specifically *son jarocho*, can be used to reshape and remake identity. *Son jarocho*, a musical and cultural tradition from Veracruz, México, has moved across borders, and is now present in the U.S. (Díaz-Sánchez and Hernández, 2013). However, there is little documentation as to how *son jarocho* is embodied in the communities that are practicing this music. This research documents how an intergenerational collective of Chicanxs in San Antonio, *Tejas* is using *son jarocho* and its *cultura* to decolonize their identities, reclaim indigenous and afro-mestizo roots, and as a vehicle for social justice. Through *testimonios* from Chicanxs, this thesis documents how *son jarocho* traditions and culture have formed transnational communities between Chicanxs and communities in Veracruz, *México*. Through Chicana feminist epistemologies (Delgado Bernal, 1998) and decolonial research methods (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012), this thesis documents Chicanx stories through Chicanx voices. This research aims to help fill the need for documentation—through Chicanx voices—on how Chicanxs today are using the arts to build community.

[1] On use of the spelling "Chicanx" and "*lxs*" – The author attended The LGBT Safe Zone Training hosted by OLLU, it was shared that the use of "x" in place of the traditional Spanish pronoun endings of "a" for female and "o" for male, leaves room for more than just two (male or female) genders. Chicanx, then, is all inclusive allowing for not only more than two genders, but fluidity among those various genders.
[2] Culture (translation provided by author)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

## LIST OF TABLES

## LIST OF FIGURES

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

To combat racism and oppression in their everyday lives, Chicanxs seek out spaces where they can come together, share lived experiences, and learn from one another. When Chicanxs find a space—*una comunidad, una casa*[3]—where they can explore their true Chicanx identity, they find that they are home in what Gloria Anzaldúa (1983) calls *El Mundo Zurdo,* the left-handed world (p. 196). Anzaldúa (1983) describes *El Mundo Zurdo* as a place where the "colored, the queer, the poor, the female, the physically challenged" feel at home (p. 196). *El Mundo Zurdo* becomes a place where Chicanxs can struggle together; form a vision which "spans from the self-love of our colored skins," (Anzaldúa, 1983, p. 196). El Tallercito is a manifestation of a collective vision of Chicanxs, struggling together to create a place of our own, where we can explore and find connections to our roots.

This study pulls from Chicana feminist epistemology (Delgado Bernal, 1998) and decolonial methodology (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012) to investigate the complex realities that exist in the lives of the Chicanxs who make up the collective El Tallercito de Son SATX. The purpose of this qualitative ethnographic study is to describe the ways in which members of El Tallercito de Son understand their identities and create community through the musical and cultural tradition that is *son jarocho.*

As Chicanx identities and communities in the U.S. grow, change, and evolve, documentation is needed—by Chicanxs, for the Chicanx community. Too frequently, stories of people of color are researched and documented by outsiders replicating colonial notions of the "other" (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Couched within Chicana feminist and Indigenous methodologies, this study creates a space for Chicanxs to research, document, and give voice to the Chicanx experience in the U.S. *Cultura* has always been fundamental to Chicanx identity and

[3] A community, a home (translation provided by the author)

consciousness. As such, this study documents how Chicanxs today are reclaiming *cultura* to not only self-make identity, but also how they're using *cultura*—specifically the community of El Tallercito de Son SATX—as a vehicle for social change.

El Tallercito de Son SATX is an intergenerational collective of mostly Chicanxs, with a few Mexican immigrants and other Latinxs, whose mission is to *crear comunidad a través de la cultura*—to create community through culture. *Lxs talleristas*—members who have become a part of the community that is El Tallercito de Son—participate in free weekly community *talleres* or workshops where *son jarocho* is taught and used as a vehicle to reclaim cultural identity and participate in social justice efforts within the community.

El Tallercito de Son is a manifestation of *El Mundo Zurdo* (Anzaldúa, 1983) where Chicanxs have created a home, *una comunidad*, a third space where they are *libres*—free to speak whichever language they chose, free to cross *fronteras*[4] fluidly, free to identify however they see fit. Over the past two and a half years, *lxs talleristas* have collectively created a mission statement and a logo to reflect this third space. *Lxs talleristas* describe themselves as:

> … a collective of students, teachers, artists, activists, queers, community organizers, and musicians who share *son jarocho* with the community of San Antonio through FREE community *talleres*, or workshops. El Tallercito de Son uses *son jarocho* as a vehicle for social justice and human rights. We are inclusive and everyone is welcome to join us as we learn, share, and live *nuestra cultura*[5]. For *lxs talleristas de* El Tallercito, our ultimate mission is to create community through *cultura*. El Tallercito creates transnational communities with collectives in Veracruz and throughout México We are *artivistas*[6] who bring awareness and raise our voices through music and dance.

[4] Borders (all translation provided by the author)
[5] Our culture (all translation provided by the author)
[6] *Artivista* – Someone who is an activist and an artist, and uses art for political actions

Figure 1: El Tallercito Logo

As a founding member of the collective and as a *maestra* of El Tallercito, I actively work towards a praxis that stays true to the mission statement of creating community. As a scholar activist, I'm intentional of developing a methodology where documentation and research can be done as a collective. As such, this research project turns to Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (2012) indigenous research agenda, which constitutes an agenda for action. This research paradigm is conceptualized as "constituting a programme and set of approaches that are situated within decolonization politics" and is focused strategically on the goal of self-determination (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 120). Research, then, can become more than a case study and/or documentation—it can become social justice (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). The indigenous research agenda "necessarily involves the process of transformation, of decolonization, of healing and of mobilization" (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 120)—much like El Tallercito's goal of creating decolonized spaces for Chicanxs where ancestral culture through *son jarocho* is recovered and reclaimed.

**(Re)Colonization of the Chicanx**

Chicanxs are a colonized people who have been (re)colonized time and time again. (Re)colonization occurs daily in the lives of Chicanxs of all generations—when the work place skips over qualified Chicanxs for promotions in favor of white employees, when the educational system says "English Only" in schools denying young Chicanitxs their language, when police officers across the country racially profile young Chicanxs, arresting them because they are brown. Colonization didn't stop with the Spanish *conquistadores* who conquered *México*, nearly 500 years later. Chicanxs—and other Latinxs—are colonized over and over again in their everyday lives; I call this process of continued colonization (re)colonization.

For hundreds of years, a process of continued (re)colonization continued in Mexico: indigenous, mestizo, and *Africanos* were being forced into the Catholic religion, being forced to assimilate to Spanish language, being forced to leave their rituals, traditions, and *cultura* behind. When the Spanish colonizers—accompanied by Catholic missionaries—arrived to the quiet hills of *los altos de* Jalisco, they raped my *indígena* ancestors. My Huichol ancestors became mestizos, a living legacy, proof in flesh and blood of what the colonizers had done to the indigenous people. My ancestors were (re)colonized during the *Revolución Mexicana*, when corrupt government agents stole their land, leaving my ancestors with *casi nada*[7]. *Mis abuelos*[8] left their home, driven out by the aftermath of the *revolución*, and when they arrived to the United States, they were greeted by Anglo (re)colonization.

The life that *mis abuelos* found in the late 1940's on this side of the *frontera*[9] was not easy. They faced (re)colonization daily: when their pay was less than whites because they were *Mexicanos*; when they were turned away from "Whites Only" restaurants; when my grandmother

[7] almost nothing (translation provided by the author)
[8] my grandparents (translation provided by the author)
[9] border (translation provided by the author)

was turned away from hospitals for prenatal care and sent to free clinics. (Re)colonization continued into my mother's generation. Chicanxs faced (re)colonization in the schools when names like Graciela, were shortened to "Grace," forcing my mother to assimilate to white culture, or be punished. Chicanxs faced (re)colonization in their language, when they were shamed, suspended, and even beaten for speaking Spanish in school—my mother still has a hard time speaking Spanish to this day. (Re)colonization has left its ugly scars. Chicanxs from my mother's generation throughout the southwest have shared stories with me about the pain of losing their language—both physical and emotional.

Chicanxs are (re)colonized today, when ethnic studies classes are not offered at their schools, when they are forced to learn Eurocentric curricula that erase their history and narratives. Chicanxs are (re)colonized when the state of Arizona bans books by Chicanx authors. Chicanito young boys are (re)colonized in schools today when they are sent home for having *trenzas*—braids that fall down their backs, upsetting the white aesthetic. Chicanxs are (re)colonized in the university when professors tell them that their research is too radical, that no one will publish something so extreme, best to *whiten it up a bit*.

In the face of hundreds and hundreds of years of colonization and (re)colonization, Chicanxs must find a way to survive—but more than just survive, a way to live, *vivir*[10]. Cultural traditions and rituals are ways that communities can embody living traditions, ensuring that *cultura* survives (re)colonization. Within the context of U.S. colonialism, Chicanxs across generations have resisted (re)colonization through *cultura*. My *abuela* fought (re)colonization by refusing to learn English, even after being in the U.S. for over forty years. My mother's generation fought back against (re)colonization through *teatro* and poetry. Within my generation,

[10] Live (translation provided by author)

I fight (re)colonization by being in the academy, by writing this thesis, and by keeping *cultura* alive with El Tallercito.

### ***Son Jarocho*: Surviving (Re)Colonization**

*Son jarocho* has survived 500 years of colonization through the traditions and cultural practices that are still practiced in Veracruz, throughout México, and communities across the United States. *Son jarocho* can be defined as a song and dance tradition originating in Veracruz, *México* (Loza, 1992). This living tradition is the result of the melting together of musical influences derived from the Spanish colonizers of *México*, from Africans taken against their will to the New Spain as slaves, and from the indigenous populations of the southeastern region of Veracruz, *México* (Loza, 1992). The creation of *son jarocho* mirrors the creation of the Chicanx, a mixing and melding of *culturas*—sometimes by choice, sometimes by force. Since its creation, *son jarocho* has been a form of protest, a way to resist colonization through *cultura*, with music, poetry, and dance.

The first archival documentation of *son jarocho* was in a colonial edict in 1776 banning a popular *son* (a term used for a song played within *son jarocho*), *"El Chuchumbé"* for the "lascivious body movements associated with the dancing of *'El Chuchumbé'* by communities of 'broken color'" (Díaz-Sánchez and Hernández, 2013, p. 187). Catholic Spanish colonizers during the Holy Inquisition found the lascivious dance movements and poetic lyrics that often mocked religious authority vulgar, leading them to order an edict that publically outlawed *"El Chuchumbé"* (Díaz-Sánchez and Hernández, 2013). Those who simply played *son jarocho*, and were a part of *la comunidad de son*[11], acted against colonial edicts. Thus, they resisted their colonizers and kept their *cultura* alive by playing this music.

[11] The community of *son jarocho* (translation provided by the author)

It is public knowledge among the *comunidad de son* that the third root, the African root, can be found in the instruments used in *son jarocho*. Over the past nearly two decades, I have learned the history of the instruments of *son jarocho* from elders throughout Veracruz, *México*. At the heart of son, is the *tarima,* a wooden platform that zapateado, traditional tap-like poly-rhythmic dancing is danced upon. The traditional step that elders teach throughout Veracruz is called "*café con pan*," and the improvised complex poly-rhythms that *bailadoras* dance on the tarima are the melding together of indigenous and African rhythms, danced in Spanish colonizers heeled shoes. The instrument most commonly played is *la jarana,* the traditional small guitar-like eight string instrument that is played percussively, like beats on a drum. The jarana is different from the guitar in that traditionally it is carved from one solid piece of wood by a *laudero*—luthier.

*Anunciando el son*[12], marking the melody, is the *requinto jarocho*, a smaller guitar-like instrument made in the small *pueblos* throughout Veracruz, traditionally and more commonly known as *la guitarra de son*. The large bass-like instrument is traditionally known as *la guitarra grande*, and more recently, as *la leona*. *La quijada de burro o de caballo*, is the jawbone of a donkey or a horse, that is played percussively by hitting the flat side with the side of the fist causing the teeth to rattle, and scraping a wooding stick along the teeth for a guiro-like sound. *La quijada* came to Veracruz with African slaves and survived colonization through the living traditions of *son jarocho. El cajón* is a wooden box that was originally made from shipping crates on slave ships—African slaves turned the crate on its side, sat on it, and began beating it like a drum. *El pandero*, a tambourine-like percussion instrument, is a direct result of outlawed African and indigenous drums—*el pandero* became a hand drum that was easy to transport and easily hidden. *El marimbol* is another percussion instrument that is a large box with a sound hole

[12] Announcing the song (translation provided by author)

in the front where small metal keys or tongues are plucked to create a bass-like sound. *El marimbol* is a direct result of the ingenuity, creativity, and improvisation of African slaves trying to create the kalimba from their homeland.

*Jaranero* (a male who plays *jarana*) Patricio Hidalgo—a master at all things *Son Jarocho,* whose *familia* has been playing, dancing and singing *son* for generations—when interviewed by Chicanx scholars about the effects of the Holy Inquisition on the *son jarocho* community states: "*todo lo que se hacía con las manos, se lo llevaron a la tarima* —all rhythms once played by hand were transferred to the *tarima"* (Díaz-Sánchez and Hernández, 2013, p. 192). Colonization made its way to the *música* that Chicanx ancestors were playing, outlawing not only certain *sones* like *El Chuchumbé,* but also outlawing instruments of African descent. Traditional *son jarocho* musician whose family has played *son* for generations, Patricio Hidalgo shared, when using hands to play instruments—hand drums and other percussion instruments that slaves brought with them from their native Africa—was made illegal, those rhythms were not lost, but rather transformed into percussive dance on the *tarima*[13] through *zapateado*[14] (Díaz-Sánchez and Hernández, 2013).

*La tarima* has become a sacred place, *un altar sagrado*[15]*,* a place of transformation and empowerment. *Bailadora* (a woman who dances traditional *zapateado* to *son jarocho* music) Martha Vega—a *bailadora* from *la familia Vega*, a family who has conserved *son jarocho* and all of its traditions for generations—in a 2006 Chicanx produced documentary, "*Fandango, Searching for the White Monkey"* shares:

> *Siento que me transformo. Siento que volví a nacer en la tarima. Con que me sienta mal, yo sé que sí me subo a la tarima, se me olvidan los problemas. En la tarima soy otra. Soy otra Martha.* [English translation within the documentary] I feel transformed. On the

[13] A wooden platform used for dancing *son jarocho* (translation provided by the author)
[14] Tap-like percussive dancing (translation provided by the author)
[15] A sacred altar (translation provided by the author)

> *tarima* I feel that I am born again. When I feel bad, I get on the *tarima* and I forget my problems. On the *tarima* I am a different Martha.

Martha shares her personal insight as a *bailadora* on how powerful the *tarima* is for her as a *mujer*[16]. While *zapateando*—dancing, improvising, creating percussive rhythmic music with her feet—she is transformed, she is free. *La bailadora* has resisted the colonization of her ancestors, and has resisted (re)colonization by keeping once silenced traditions alive and well.

*Son jarocho* has survived (re)colonization its musical traditions continue to be heard *en los pueblos de Veracruz, México*[17]. Colonial edicts outlawing *son jarocho* couldn't kill the traditions and *cultura* of *son*; it thrived as a resistance music played by indigenous, Afro-Mexicanos. *En los barrios de los Estados Unidos*[18], you can hear *son jarocho*, as Chicanxs of all generations create new spaces where *son* can continue to flourish. Despite colonization, *la comunidad de son jarocho*—and *lxs Mexicanxs y lxs* Chicanxs who live its traditions—has managed to become a transnational community. As a transitional community, these Chicanx *artivistas* cross borders to ensure that this music flows as easily as the *música de un radio*[19] floats through the air.

***Son Jarocho pa' Este Lado***

*Son jarocho* has crossed *la frontera*[20] and become part of the diaspora of *la cultura Mexicana.* Part of the makeup of the Chicanx experience is the fluid movement of, through, over, and across borders. A transnational exchange has begun between communities in Veracruz, *México* and *los barrios* where Chicanxs live here in the United States. I remember being a junior or senior in high school in the early 2000's when different groups from Veracruz started coming

[16] Woman (translation provided by author)
[17] In the small towns of (translation provided by author)
[18] In the barrios in the United States (translation provided by author)
[19] Music of a radio (translation provided by author)
[20] Border (translation provided by author)

to California to give *talleres* for the first time in Santa Ana. As such, the roots of *son jarocho* run deep in resisting (re)colonization, in adapting and in surviving, ensuring the survival of *tradiciones y de la cultura.*

An essential part of *son jarocho*, the way that it survived colonization and (re)colonization, is through *el fandango*—the traditional community gathering where there is food, celebration, and at the heart of it all, *la tarima*, surrounded by *jaranerxs*[21] and *bailadorxs,* all playing, dancing, and singing together. The *fandango*—also known as *el huapango* in some regions of Veracruz like Los Tuxtlas—becomes central to *son jarocho*, and without it, the *música* would cease to exist. In the documentary "*Fandango, Searching for the White Monkey"* (2006) the *fandango* is described by various native *Veracruzanos,* the people who take part in *son jarocho* and all of its *tradiciones* in their daily lives, as:

> -*Esta cosa de los fandangos, es estar toda la noche…se nutre el espíritu de un modo.* [English translation provided by the documentary] This thing about the *fandango* is to be there all night…it nourishes the spirit.
> -*Como que te llenas de gusto, de alegría. Es algo que te conmueve, ¿no?* It fills you with joyful pleasure. Something moves you.
> -*Es una forma de amor, ¿no? Pero concentrado.* A form of love, but concentrated.
> -*Es algo que te envuelve, como un remolino. De repente, ya estas envuelta.* It wraps you like a tornado. Suddenly you're surrounded.
> -*En el fandango, hay de todo: convivencia, romance...el fandango incluye todo, no deja nada afuera.* The *fandango* includes everything: friendship, romance…nothing is left out.

*El fandango* becomes a way to create identity, an identity that knows no borders, that moves fluidly from place to place, *de lugar a lugar.* A living, breathing, growing *comunidad*, one that moves with the people, across borders—through them, over them, and when a physical border must stand between them, forcing them to be separated, then there will be a *fandango* that exists in spite of the border. *El Fandango Fornterizo,* The Borderland *Fandango*, exists in spite of the physical border that separates Tijuana, *México* and San Diego, California, USA, is a

[21] a person who plays the *jarana*, the traditional string instrument played in *son jarocho*

transnational collaboration between Chicanxs from *California y Tejas*, and as far as Washington, DC, and communities in Veracruz, *México* that takes place yearly in May. I myself attended in 2014, and shared *cultura* through the thick, layered wire fence that towered over us, reminding us as Chicanxs and *Méxicanxs* we are still being (re)colonized today. Through *son jarocho*, Chicanxs have found a way to not only resist (re)colonization, but have found an identity, *una comunidad*, a place to be safe, a place to be Chicanx. *Son jarocho* has no borders, and cannot be stopped by the physical wall that separates *México* and *los Estados Unidos.*

**El Tallercito de Son SATX: (Re)Claiming Spaces**

El Tallercito de Son is a new community, *un espacio nuevo,* and as a Chicanx run space, it is a challenge to break into spaces that have been historically dominated by mainstream "Mexican Culture" (i.e. mariachis) and whites who appropriate and sell their distorted notions of Mexican culture in public spaces and at cultural events. As a Chicana who positions herself as an activist and *artivista*, they are missing the very *cultura* they boast to have. Chicano writer, activist, and father of Chicano Theatre, Luis Valdez (1971) wrote that "the nature of Chicanismo calls for a revolutionary turn in the arts as well as in society" (p. 7). Using the arts, *la música y el baile*—specifically *son jarocho y sus tradiciones*—El Tallercito de Son is a revolutionary force in both the art community and in the greater San Antonio community.

El Tallercito has broken into the cultural arts community, being invited to perform at the City of San Antonio's prestigious Muertos Fest—Downtown's Historic La Villita's celebration of Día de los Muertos. The Esperanza Peace and Justice Center, a leader in the cultural arts community, has supported El Tallercito's mission, inviting the collective to perform at their many cultural events throughout the year. San Anto Cultural Arts, deep in the heart of San Antonio's Westside *barrio,* has opened its doors to El Tallercito, providing a much-needed

physical home, four walls *y un techo*[22]. Moreover, Our Lady of the Lake University has partnered with El Tallercito, providing not only a space, but free *talleres* with guest *maestros*[23] from *México.* El Tallercito has also reached students in classrooms, with undergraduates at the University of Texas at San Antonio and several other colleges and universities throughout south Texas, where members have shared their music, *cultura*, and mission.

El Tallercito has even infiltrated the world of academic conferences. As a graduate student, I have used my presentation time on panels at conferences to bring eight to ten *talleristas* with me. Together, we reinvent what it means to present research in an academic space. The allotted twenty minutes is divided between theory, methodology, live *testimonios* from three to four *talleristas*, and live *son jarocho*. *Talleristas* share two minute *testimonios* about *son jarocho*, and the role it plays in their daily lives as Chicanxs. We make noise and we disrupt the status quo—we make our voices heard, we reclaim academic spaces with our *jaranas*, *versos*, and *zapateado.*

El Tallercito de Son and *lxs talleristas* have created transnational relationships, hosting several teaching artists from Veracruz, *México*—making sure that all *talleres* are free and open to the entire community, no experience or instrument necessary. All the funds that El Tallercito receives are invested in free programming and free *eventos culturales*[24] for the entire San Antonio community. While hosting the different *maestros*, *lxs talleristas* learn about communities in *México* that are using *son jarocho* the same way we are—as a vehicle for creating *comunidad*. These workshops provide vital information, sharing with us how their spaces were created and how they have evolved over time.

[22] A roof (translation provided by author)
[23] Teachers (translation provided by author)
[24] Cultural events (translation provided by author)

Part of the mission of El Tallercito is to support our larger community of San Antonio. *Lxs talleristas* attend the galas and events of local non-profits, cultural organizations, and arts organizations. El Tallercito is always *presente*[25] when it comes to raising funds for *diferentes causas*[26]—a plate sale to raise money to help with the legal costs for an undocumented *compañero* who is being detained; a fundraiser for the local *Somos MAS* organization of professors and students; a rally at the steps of the Mexican Consulate demanding justice for the missing forty-three students from Ayotzinapa, *México*. You will find *lxs talleristas*, *con sus jaranas en la mano*[27], playing music and protesting at the *marchas* as the buses arrive, *llenos de gente*[28] to be detained at the South Texas Family Residential Center in Dilley, Texas, where ICE holds undocumented mothers and children, awaiting legal action in prison-like cells. You can hear their voices, *cantando y gritando*[29], at the rallies in front of Planned Parenthood because El Tallercito *y todxs lxs talleristas* stand with Planned Parenthood and all the Chicanxs who deserve access to reproductive health care.

For *lxs talleristas* and the entire *comunidad* of El Tallercito de Son, being *presente,* having a voice that is heard, is a right that will always be fought for. To be heard in the classroom, in the workplace, wherever a Chicanx stands, to have their voice heard. A popular *son*, made famous in 1958 by Chicano rock-and-roll star Ritchie Valens, *La Bamba,* has an *estribillo* (Spanish word for "the chorus" in a *son*) that I learned fifteen years ago as a young Chicana—that most Chicanxs who play *son* know, but no one can tell you where it started—whose lyrics showcase everything that El Tallercito stands for:

[25] Present (translation provided by author)
[26] Different causes (translation provided by author)
[27] With their *jaranas* in their hands (translation provided by author)
[28] Full of people (translation provided by author)
[29] Singing and shouting (translation provided by author)

| | |
|---|---|
| *Ay arriba, ay arriba.* | Oh up, oh up |
| *Ay arriba, y arriba, y arriba van* | Oh up, and up, and up they go |
| *Como un pueblo unido,* | As a united community |
| *Como un pueblo unido se subirán* | As a united community, they will rise |
| *Pa'bajo no regresarán* | To the bottom, they shall never return |

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review explores Chicanx identity and the history and formations of the Chicanx identity through scholarly works and documentaries. This literature review will explore how various scholars have examined Chicanx identity across several generations and how these perspectives still shape Chicanx identity today. A review of transnationalism and the way communities are affected and influenced by transnational relationships will be presented as well—Chicanxs in the U.S. have roots in Mexico and beyond, creating a transnational identity. Moreover, this literature review explores ethnomusicology research on *son jarocho*, as a musical and cultural tradition from Veracruz, *México*, and present-day movements to sustain this tradition in Chicanxs communities. A history of the African diaspora in *México* is needed to better navigate the traditions of *son jarocho* and explore how connections can be made to the Chicanx experience today.

As scholars have pointed out, Chicanx identity has always be tied closely to Chicanx art, a brief review of literature on the Chicanx movement and the arts will be done. Social justice and social change has always formed part of the Chicanx identity as well; I will look at social justice and the arts, and the role the arts play in social justice movements. Currently, there is little documentation as to how *son jarocho* plays a part in the construction of Chicanx identity. This thesis hopes to note the need for more research on *son jarocho* traditions and culture through firsthand accounts—*testimonios*—and the transnational communities that are being formed between Chicanxs and communities in Veracruz, *México*. By examining Chicanx identity and the arts, *son jarocho*, and transnationalism, I can begin to explore and examine the factors that lead up to El Tallercito using *son jarocho* as a vehicle to reshape and remake Chicanx identity, and the role that transnational relationships play in the collective.

**Chicanx Identity and the Reexamination and Reclamation of (Re)Colonized Mexican *Cultura***

Identity is a complex and personal ever-evolving process—but identity is also very social. The way one identifies directly correlates to their political views, the way that one choses to live life. Luis Urrieta (2009), a cultural studies scholar whose research centers around cultural identities writes that:

> Identity is a dynamic, co-constructed cultural phenomenon...identity is...a site for self-making, embedded in a collective past and produced in practice through life experiences. By engaging in self-making, individuals construct conceptually a sense of who they are as individuals in collectivity. The understanding of identity...is one of becoming, not being. (p. 69)

As Mexican-Americans engage in the self-making—thereby constructing—of their own unique identity, some make a conscious decision to self-identify as a Chicanx. Chicana feminist Norma Alarcón (1990), a scholar in feminist critical theory, notes:

> The name Chicana is not a name that woman (or men) are born to or with, as is often the case with 'Mexican,' but rather it is consciously and critically assumed and serves as a point of redeparture for dismantling historical conjunctures of crisis, confusion, political and ideological conflict and contradiction. (p. 250)

Assuming the Chicanx identity is a form a resistance, a way to fight back against (re)colonization, being Chicanx means taking a political stance, or in the words of Urrieta (2009), "a commitment to struggle against white supremacy, to work toward individual and collective determination" (p. 68). With such great responsibility, not all Mexican-Americans are willing to take the political stance required to identify as Chicanx.

As early as 1978, Chicano scholar Elihu Carranza was writing and theorizing about Chicano identity: "The Chicano is a cultural revolution...Only recently has the Chicano taken pause to examine carefully what has...burdened him: an unexamined cultural legacy, constituting a blend, in varying proportions, of the educational system and his cultural heritage" (pp. 10-11).

What do these examinations look like? Research and documentation—by Chicanxs for the Chicanx community—on how Chicanxs embark on these examinations of cultural legacy and what those processes look like is needed. As a part of these examinations into Chicanx cultural legacy and cultural heritage, Chicanxs have turned to a reexamination of the values of their parents and grandparents (Carranza, 1978).

As Chicanxs begin to reexamine the world of their grandparents and *antepasados*[30], they often find that colonization and conquest have caused intense and highly disruptive culture change sequences (Vigil & Hanley, 2002). In 2002, Gisella Hanley, a scholar with expertise in qualitative social research with a focus on cultural anthropology, and scholar James Diego Vigil, whose research interests include socio-cultural change, explain that "Social identities are historical constructs and modern Chicano identity is a result of historical processes...Cultural change did not occur peacefully, but was forced through Spanish domination...consequences of these changes have continued to plague people to this day" (pp. 395, 403). This forced colonized cultural change was mainly inflicted on indigenous populations and African slave populations (Vigil & Hanley 2002).

Chicanx roots run deep and are entangled with Mexican roots. As a Chicanx explores his/her/their identity, they will find themselves exploring their Mexican roots. Part of the colonizing plan of the Spanish was to assimilate indigenous and African slave populations through racial and cultural blending, also known as *mestizaje* (Vigil & Hanley, 2002). *Mestizaje,* then, became a way to white-wash indigenous and African populations. *Mestizaje* unfolded unevenly and reached all aspects of life, including art and music. Vigil and Hanley (2002) note that: "The success and fortune of mestizos depended in great measure on how close their skin

[30] Ancestors (translation provided by author)

color and racial features matched those of the Europeans. Those who had Indian or African heritage...preferred to conceal the fact in order to gain acceptance" (p. 405).

Although third or fourth generation Chicanxs may no longer speak an indigenous language, or even Spanish, Chicanxs still adhere to certain rituals or ceremonies and eat foods prepared in particular ways directly tied to their Mexican roots (Vigil & Hanley, 2002). Vigil and Hanley (2002) write that Chicanxs, no matter the generation: "… have incorporated these cultural influences differently, a process mediated by variables such as age and gender" (pp. 418-419). What is not noted in the literature are examples—direct *testimonios* from Chicanxs—of how Chicanxs today select which rituals or ceremonies they adhere to, and how they incorporate these cultural influences into their identity.

**Transnationalism**

As Chicanxs today navigate the complex construction and self-making of identities, many search for a connection to roots, a connection to something larger than themselves, a connection to their *cultura*. Transnational anthropology scholar Steven Vertovec (1999) writes that "The awareness of multi-locality stimulates the desire to connect oneself with others, both 'here' and 'there' who share the same 'routes' and 'roots'" (p. 450). As Chicanxs investigate these roots and routes across the U.S.-Mexico border, and into *México*, they create transnational communities and relationships.

Manuel A. Vásquez (2009) a scholar from El Salvador whose research focuses on how Latinx immigration affects American communities explains "Transnationalism refers to modes of being and belonging—worldviews, practices, social relations, and institutions—which span two or more nation states, making it possible for individuals to be multiply embedded, often developing alternative and/or hybrid identities" (p. 553). Anthropologist Liliana K. Goldin

(1999) focuses her research on cultural change noting that "transnational identities are best studied from a process perspective that emphasizes the fluid nature of ideologies" (p. 4) —much like the fluidity of Chicanx identities with ancestral, familial, and cultural ties to *México*. Goldin (1999) makes a point to note that, "...we need more in-depth, detailed...work that can register the many voices of transnational actors" (p. 9). There is a lack of research on emerging transnational communities of Chicanxs and how these transnational relationships are formed, cultivated, and maintained across distance and long periods of time without face-to-face interaction.

**The African Diaspora in Chicanx Identity**

Veracruz, a state along the Southern Gulf Coast of *México*, was the point of entry for nearly all African slaves who passed through *México*. Cultural anthropologist Angela N. Casteñeda (2006), who researches identity and expressive culture among communities of the African diaspora throughout Latino America explains that "Veracruz...witnessed the arrival of the Spanish and Cortés's first steps on American soil [on April 21, 1592]. Its history is bursting with bloody battles...The arrival of the African slaves in Veracruz came quickly on the heels of Cortés" (pp. 41-42). Even though colonialism tried to negate, erase, and forget the African root in Mexican culture and tradition, as Díaz-Sánchez and Hernández (2013) point out, "The histories of African-descended populations remained alive in embodied cultural practices, specifically regional music and dance forms from several Mexican States" (p. 191). Micaela Díaz-Sánchez, a Chicana feminist scholar who focuses her research on Afro-Latina/o diaspora and performance, along with scholar Alexandro Hernández, an ethnomusicologist who conducts research on U.S. protest music within the Chicana/o community have contributed to a greater understanding of the African legacies in *México* that have survived colonization as living traditions within *son jarocho.*

According to Casteñeda (2006), research points to diminishing links between African influences on Veracruz culture, and in her investigation "demonstrates that indeed the African derived influences found in Veracruz today are representative of a more recent Afro-Caribbean influence" (p. 43). However, Díaz-Sánchez and Hernández (2013), note that the histories of these African descendants continue on as "living traditions in *son jarocho*...an Afro-Mexican musical tradition from Southern Veracruz with African diasporic elements" (pp. 191, 187). In her work, Casteñeda (2006) identifies a need for "revisiting and reinvigorating academic research on the African Diaspora in Mexico" (p. 39), noting the lack of research on the African third root in *México.*

As mentioned earlier, *mestizaje* historically negated African roots in Mexican culture and among its people. In the reexamination of history in the search for Chicanx identity, it is necessary to explore the third root—the African root—of Mexican *cultura.* Chicanxs can use *mestizaje* as a way to reclaim this long forgotten—and ignored—third root, Africa. Díaz-Sánchez and Hernández (2013), write that "The inception of a Mexican national identity propelled the negation of the histories of Afro-Mexicans in the national imagery of Mexico" (p. 191). African roots in Mexican identity have been negated too long. As part of reexamining and reclaiming Chicanx identity, Chicanxs today can begin to investigate and heal the colonial wounds of erasing our African ancestry.

### ***Son Jarocho*: Identity as *Cultura***

As a living tradition, *son jarocho* has survived (re)colonization. In their article, Díaz-Sánchez and Hernández (2013) note that because of its direct African influence, *son jarocho* had some of its earliest documentation in a 1779 colonial edict prohibiting a specific song or *son—El Chuchumbé* (p. 192). *Son jarocho* becomes a form of resistance—*son jarocho* not only survived

the 1779 colonial ban, but it is alive and thriving today. *Son jarocho* has crossed the border that divides their ancestral homeland into two, the U.S. and *México*, and can be heard in Chicanx barrios today throughout the United States.

Ethnomusicology scholar Steven Loza (1992), whose research areas include Chicano music in the U.S., used the term Hispanic to refer to *son jarocho* and other regional Mexican musical traditions that influenced Chicanx musicians in East Los Angeles in the 1970's and 1980's. Using a term like Hispanic is problematic when referring to not only Chicanx traditions, but in referring to Mexican music and culture—especially with African and indigenous roots. Peruvian-American scholar, Suzanne Oboler (1995) in her research on Latino/a studies explains that:

> The term 'Hispanic' is a product of the United States: the label Hispanic has indeed been 'Made in the U.S.A.' The term Hispanic actually began to be heard during a period [1970's] in which Mexican Americans...were affirming their presence and identity *at a national level* for the first time in U.S. history; and they were doing so not in pan-ethnic 'Hispanic' or 'Latino' terms, but largely in specific cultural national terms. (pp.48, 50)

As Oboler (1995) points out, Hispanic is a term born in the United States to attempt to homogenize the many different groups of Latinxs in the United States, to put a stop to individual Latinx national identities—like Chicanx identity. Given the political context of the word Hispanic, how could Loza (1992) use the made in the U.S.A term to describe not only Mexican culture and music, but Chicanx identity—the latter created as a form of resistance to European colonialism?

Loza (1992) and Díaz-Sánchez and Hernández (2013) note two different Chicanx bands/ensembles who are performing *son jarocho* with major Chicanx influences. However, both leave out the importance of the community traditions—and direct roots and ties to a community—that are a part of the musical and cultural tradition that is *son jarocho.* Díaz-

Sánchez and Hernández (2013) chose to highlight East Los Angeles Chicanx band Las Cafeteras as an example of a "Chicano-Jarocho" ensemble in the U.S. that has used *son jarocho* (specifically *El Chuchumbé*) to "narrate struggle and protest" (p. 196). Las Cafeteras recorded *El Chuchumbé* on their album *It's Time* (2012) with verses that denounce current anti-international migrant fervor in Arizona. However, recent scandal has tarnished the band's reputation as a social justice and Chicanx rights band, when one of the female band members told the media she was kicked out, and that the band had major issues with misogyny and patriarchy amongst the male members of the group—not at all in the spirit of community[31].

The 2006 documentary, *Fandango: Searching for the White Monkey*, documents a group of Mexican-American youth who visit different communities in Veracruz, *México*, where *son jarocho* is still a part of everyday life, rituals, and traditions. The documentary contains several interviews with musicians and community members who give their stories—*testimonios*—on how *son jarocho* has survived (re)colonization. Although *Fandango: Searching for the White Monkey* (2006) documents that *son jarocho* has not only survived but is still a living tradition in Veracruz, *México*, there is no documentation as to how Chicanx communities in the U.S. have embodied *son jarocho*, its traditions, and *cultura* as part of their everyday life, rituals, and traditions as Chicanxs.

By far, the most disturbing and inaccurate documentation of *son jarocho* can be found in the two books (2004; 2010) by performance scholar Anita González. González, whose background is in dance, theater, and performing arts, made her first feeble attempt at theorizing and documenting *son jarocho* practices and traditions in her 2004 book, *Jaorcho's Soul*. Unfortunately, from the first page, González's book is riddled with poor terminology, lack of

[31] Information from author's personal lived experience, via social media from members of Las Cafeteras.

citations and credible sources, and an overall shallow understanding of the complex and intersectional history of *son jarocho.* For example, González (2004) defines the term *jarocho* as "once a derogatory term for poor Black field workers, now describes a music and dance tradition that blends elements of Spanish, Native American, and African cultures and symbolizes the *mestizaje*, or cultural mixing that defines Mexico" (p. 1). When you try and find the source that she uses to define *jarocho*, as well as the theoretical framework she uses to define mestizaje in her research, none can be found.

González clearly has a superficial and shallow understanding of the musical traditions behind the instrumentation of *son jarocho*. She writes, "it represents the synthesis of Spanish zapateado, African and American Indian percussion, campesino serenades, costal sensuality, and carnal yearnings of love" (González, 2004, p. 13). As a dedicated student and practitioner of *son jarocho* for nearly two decades, who has studied with the best and brightest of *son jarocho*, I can tell you that this statement is riddled with falsities. The only thing "Spanish" about the *zapateado* in *son jarocho* are the shoes used to dance and the name, *zapateado*. Women dancing *son jarocho* wore Spanish colonizers *zapateado* shoes so that their traditions could live on, could survive the Holy Inquisition, and colonial edicts banning the dancing of *son jarocho*. The rhythms that are danced percussively by *bailadoras de son jarocho* are a mix of African and indigenous polyrhythms—weaving in and out of the African and the indigenous, at times, playfully combining both. Her term "American Indian" is also problematic because of its incorrect use in describing indigenous peoples from Mexico; this is a term used to describe federally recognized indigenous tribes in the U.S. Moreover, what she could possibly mean by "coastal sensuality" is lost on me, and to be honest, I find it insulting to include in a definition of *son jarocho* as this insinuates that *son jarocho* cannot exist without some sort of sensual element.

What González calls “campesino serenades” are *décimas* carried to Veracruz on salve ships from Cuba. In the glossary of her book, González (2004) completely misses this very important fact about the *décima*.

Terminology in general is an issue throughout González’s book. The glossary alone is full of misinterpretations, misleading definitions, and ideas that sound completely made up. González (2004) limits an *encuentro* to “an academic meeting or conference” (p. 152). I have been to a community *encuentro*, where there was not a single academic for at least a two-hundred-mile radius. In her definition of a *fandango*, González (2004) writes a “celebratory party with dancing, music, song, and socializing. The term also refers to a Spanish music and dance form” (p. 152). González fails to provide an in-depth explanation of the cultural traditions that a *fandango* encompasses—reaching far beyond dancing, music, song and socializing—for a community. She also manages to use the colonizing Spanish music and dance form, something that not a single person in the tradition and *cultura* of *son jarocho* would say when defining *un fandango*. In addition to poor definitions, González’s (2004) book is full of spelling errors, for example, the spelling of the word *tarima*—she spells it *tárima,* moving the accent which completely changes the way the word is pronounced (p. 154).

As if one book wasn’t bad enough to poison the well of the already very small academic pool of research on *son jarocho*, in 2010 González published her second book, *Afro-Mexico: Dancing Between Myth and Reality.* Because completely botching one *tradición* in *México* wasn’t enough, she thought she would go after a few more in her new book. González’s overall lack of citation, sources, and credible knowledge continues. For example, in one section, González (2010) uses problematic terminology, blurring the lines between stylized westernized *ballet folklórico* interpretations of *son jarocho* for the stage and the traditional *fandango*:

"Jarocho, when performed spontaneously, at a *fandango* or a public festival, is a competitive courtship event" (p. 127). Not only does González fail to differentiate between *ballet folklórico's* use of westernized *son jarocho* for the stage versus the dancing of traditional *son jarocho* in a community *fandango*, but she cheaply reduces all of *son jarocho* dancing and traditions into a "competitive courtship event" —something that in reality plays only one part of the *fandango* and *son jarocho* tradition.

González (2010) continues with her lack of research when defining the musical elements of the instrumentation of *son jarocho*, she writes "the *jarana*…carries the melody, which drives the music…" (p. 128). One of the first lessons you learn when you begin playing the *jarana*, is that it is played percussively. Although the *jarana* is a string instrument, it is used to carry the rhythm. It is the *requinto*, the *leona*, the *violín*, and the voice that carry the melody. González (2010) continues her lack of citations and credible sources in her claims of zapateado: "The description of the dances are gestured, expressive, and hip oriented—even the incorporation of pelvic shaking and circling—is typical of central African dance styles" (p. 130). There is an African presence in the style, execution, and cadence of the *bailadoras* who dance *son jarocho.* However, those African traditions were brought over with the slaves that were forcibly stolen from West African nations like Nigeria and Angola—another lesson you learn in one of your first *talleres de zapateado* with elders from Veracruz.

Perhaps the most upsetting and disturbing misnomer found in González's (2010) book is a photograph of a young man playing a *quijada* or a jawbone (p. 68). The caption reads: "Another instrument that accompanies the Devil Dance is the jawbone of a cow…" (p. 68). It is actually the jawbone of a horse. Anyone in the *son jarocho* community—anyone who has invested the time in at least one workshop, class, or *taller*—can easily tell you that. In the

Mexican states of Veracruz and Guerrero, two of the three states in *México* with the most Afro-Mexican traditions, *culturas*, and living traditions, *quijadas de burro o quijadas de caballo*—donkey or horse jaws—are used as percussion instruments. This is another part of *son jarocho* that finds its origins in Africa by way of Cuba, just like the aforementioned *décima*. What I find most disturbing about this mistake is that all González had to do was ask—a simple conversation between her and the subject of the photograph would have yielded not only the correct information, but a better understanding of the instrument's historical legacy and importance.

Clearly, there is a need for more research and documentation on *son jarocho*; research that is credible, respectful, and that includes the voice and knowledge of the people who have ensured that *son jarocho's* survival. My research provides credible knowledge on *son jarocho*—its *cultura*, traditions, and instrumentation. Through my own cultural intuition (Delgado Bernal, 1998), the ancestral knowledge that elders from communities in Veracruz have shared with me, and the knowledge that nearly two decades of dedicated study of *son jarocho* has afforded me, my research fills a gap in credible documentation of not only traditional *son jarocho*, but the way that Chicanx communities have embodied *son jarocho* as a tool for identity making, to explore ancestral roots, and decolonial practices.

**The Chicanx Movement and The Arts: A Vehicle for Social Change**

*Son jarocho* is not only a cultural tradition, but a musical art form grounded in resistance. As such, *son jarocho* has been a tool for Chicanxs to use in their political and social lives. From the early beginnings of the Chicanx movement, the arts were present.

Playwright and pioneer in Chicano theatre, referred to by many as the father of Chicano theatre, Luis Valdez (1971), wrote:

> The nature of Chicanismo calls for a revolutionary turn in the arts as well as in society. Chicano theatre must be revolutionary in technique as well as content. It must be popular,

> subject to no other critics except the pueblo itself; but it must also educate the pueblo toward an appreciation of *social change,* on and off the stage. (pp. 6-7).

Chicanxs can use *son jarocho* as a tool to educate the *pueblo* (the community) on social change, and even social justice.

Visual artist and Mexican American Studies scholar and writer Carlos Francisco Jackson (2009) notes that "the Chicano art movement was part of a larger movement of Chicanos struggling for self-determination and reclamation of their community's history and culture" (p. 60). *Son jarocho*, as a musical art form, can help Chicanxs reclaim their history and culture. Miles and Dawson (2012) write that "performing arts are woven into the histories and movements for social change" and that "artists do more than document change...art simultaneously draws from culture and process culture" (p. 2). There is a lack of research and documentation on how Chicanx communities today use the arts—not just music, but *all* of the arts—as a vehicle for social change.

In their article focusing on arts and social justice movements, Miles and Dawson (2012) "Asks those interested in social change to engage communities in critical discourse and linking their own lives to collective experience and actions for change...art remains a powerful tool for learning about and expressing actions for change" (p. 3). Chicanx communities have historically used the arts in their campaigns for social justice—El Teatro Campesino was fundamental in early boycotts in the Chicanx movement (Valdez, 1990). Research is needed in order to document how Chicanxs today are using art as a tool for learning and creating social change.

**The Ever Evolving Chicanx Identity**

Chicanx identity is in constant movement—it is fluid and ever evolving. As Chicanxs today reexamine cultural heritage and traditions lost to (re)colonization, their discoveries shape and construct their Chicanx identity. Through this process of reexamination and identity

construction, transnational communities and relationships are formed. There is an urgent need to document these transnational communities and relationships; and how they shape and inform Chicanx identity. *Son jarocho* has survived (re)colonization and the attempt to negate and erase African legacies in Mexican culture, traditions, and population. These living traditions need to be documented with *testimonios* of those *Veracruzanos* still living the *cultura* and traditions of *son jarocho*.

*Son jarocho* is a living tradition of the third root of Mexican *cultura*—Africa. Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) also wrote about a third root, a third element:

> That third element is in new consciousness—a mestiza consciousness...the future will belong to the mestiza. Because the future depends...on the straddling of two or more cultures. By creating new mythos—that is, a change in the way we perceive reality, the way we see ourselves and the ways we behave—*la mestiza* creates a new consciousness (p. 80).

My research documents through *testimonios* how Chicanxs in San Antonio, Texas in 2017 reshape and remake identity using *son jarocho* and *cultura* as a vehicle. This research will explore the different ways in which Chicanxs today embody the Chicanx identity, and the role that the arts, specifically *son jarocho* play in that identity. By documenting Chicanx *testimonios*, this research provides valuable insight as to how Chicanxs create community through *son jarocho*.

## CHAPTER THREE: *AUTOHISTORIA*

### How *Son Jarocho* Became the Soundtrack to My Ancestral Knowledge

I don't remember the exact dates. What I remember is the way I felt the first time I heard *son jarocho.* I remember the way my heartbeat fell into perfect sync with the *bailadora*'s *zapateado* or percussive tap-like dancing, creating intricate, complex polyrhythms. At that time, I had never heard or learned anything like that in my ten years of *ballet folklórico* training. The way the *jarana* sounded, powerful, with a *fuerza*[32] that seemed much too formidable to be coming out of such a small instrument. I had never seen a *quijada de burro*—a donkey jaw—used as an instrument, the teeth rattling with each pound of the fist against the flat part of the jaw bone.

These are my first images, my first sounds, my first experiences with traditional *son jarocho.* I was privileged and fortunate enough to grow up learning *ballet folklórico,* and by the time I graduated middle school, I had roughly ten years of experience. I grew up in Santa Ana, California—or *SanTana*, *Califas* to us native *SanTaneras*—in a humble working-class Chicanx barrio with a growing Mexican immigrant population. The *ballet folklórico* classes I took were about the only privilege my parents could afford me growing up; at the time, none of us realized just how fundamental those classes would be.

It was on a group trip to an international *ballet folklórico* conference held yearly—my first one ever—that my love for *son jarocho tradicional* began. There was a showcase night the first night we got to the conference held in San Antonio, *Tejas*, that year. Who knew that over fifteen years later, I would find myself back where it started, creating a community from a love that started as a *chamaca,* a young girl. The showcase featured groups from both *México* and the U.S. To be very honest, that entire conference is a blur. My middle school almost high school

[32] Force (translation provided by author)

self couldn't handle all the firsts. But one memory is clear, as if it were yesterday—the moment that Son Luna came onto the stage and played their musical set in the middle of group after group of flashy, extravagant *ballet folklórico* numbers.

Shortly after that trip, El Centro Cultural de *México* opened the doors to its first physical building in Santa Ana. Now in high school, I found myself rushing out of my last class to catch the 3:15pm *camion*[33] because I couldn't wait to go to El Centro. A whole new world of *cultura* opened up to me: *talleres* on *gastronomía*, *textiles*, different things from *México*, and finally, *talleres de son jarocho*. Through a grant that I believe was called CDBG—it's funny the thing one's mind choses to remember, like four arbitrary letters that lived on the sticker plastered to the back of the *jarana primera* I took everywhere with me for years—El Centro purchased a few *jaranas*, and brought groups from *México* who played *son jarocho* like Mono Blanco, and later Los Cojolites, to *SanTana* to give *talleres*. By the time I was fifteen-years-old, I was at El Centro playing *son*—as everyone affectionately shortens *son jarocho* to—more than I was at home.

Back in the day, it wasn't easy to learn *son jarocho—y mucho menos*[34] for a Chicanita like me. LA had a small but growing *son jarocho* community. The *mujeres* mostly danced back then and the *hombres* played the instruments. For a poor Chicanita from *el barrio de SanTana,* LA might has well have been New York City. With poor public transportation and parents who worked all day, how was I going to get myself to LA? Besides, the few times I did manage to get there, women were always "encouraged" to learn *zapateado*, and if lessons included the *jarana*, it was always simplified for her. It came down to getting my hands on *pirata* copies of burned CD's, putting on my headphones in the bathroom of my parent's one bedroom apartment, and teaching myself through much trial and error.

[33] Bus (translation provided by author)
[34] Much less (translation provided by author)

I studied hard in high school, getting nearly straight A's because I knew that if I excelled in my studies, my parents would let me spend the small amount of money I had earned and saved on plane tickets to *México* during spring break, Christmas vacation, and summer time. Back in 2000, you could make the trip to Veracruz with $200, *más o menos*. It was a plane ride from LAX to *el DF,* Mexico City, a taxi ride to la *estación de ADO*, the bus station, then about eight hours to El Puerto de Veracruz, then anywhere from one to ten hours to whichever *pueblito* or *rancho* that was the final destination. I lived in *pueblos* with names like Minatitlán, Coatzacoalcos, Jáltipan, Chacalapa, places that didn't even have telephone lines in homes, and the only way for a seventeen-year-old to call home was to wait in line at a community public phone in the middle of the *zócalo*.

The pueblos—*rancherías*, as the local Veracruzanos often referred to them—varied in the type of communities they were. Most were agrarian, farming *milpa, chiles, tabaco*, and other crops on small family plots. The majority of the people who lived there were afro-mestizos. I was immersed in a whole new world of c*utlura*, an entire third root, an African root, I never truly understood until living in Veracruz. I fell in love with the new and interesting foods with names like *garnacha*—an empanada-like *antojito* from Los Tuxtlas. For a Chicana in search of connections and roots in *México*, these *pueblitos* became a magical place of transformation as I became more and more in-tune with my roots.

Reflecting on those journeys, *viajes* that I made *solita*, with a small rolling suitcase, a backpack *y mi jarana*—nearly twenty years after that first solo trip—I realize that my ancestors were with me every step of the way. Traveling alone, throughout *México*, with the *pocha* Spanish I had back then, carrying all my cash in different places—the doc martin boots I wore, the socks inside of them, inside my *jarana*, the suitcase, my *chones* even—was not something that most

teenage Chicanitas were doing in the early 2000's. I try and remember little Keli Rosa as a young Chicanita, in her own version of *nepantla*, living in-between spaces—navigating two worlds, crossing back and forth fluidly over and across borders (Anzaldúa, 2002).

**A Chicana's Journey Across States**

My love of *son jarocho* is deeply rooted in *comunidad.* When I was in high school, I was searching for a place to belong, a place to be my whole self when I found a home in *son jarocho*. The *talleres de son* at El Centro Cultural de *México* instilled in me the importance of *comunidad*, the importance of respecting *las tradiciónes* while still creating new ones, and the importance of sharing the precious ancestral knowledge that had been shared with us. As I advanced in my undergraduate degree, I realized that to achieve what I wanted to academically as a first-generation Chicana scholar, I needed to find a new university. I moved away from *SanTana*, and from my home at El Centro Cultural, to attend San Jose State University in northern *Califs*. While living *en la bahía*—what the *son* community calls San Francisco, San Jose, and Oakland, the bay area in northern Califas—I was a part of a *comunidad de son*. The *talleres* were always free or on a donation basis, and the end goal was always to bring a *maestro/a* from Veracruz to share with the *comunidad.*

Life is full of such unexpected twists and turns, and after only fourteen months in the bay area, I found myself selling my 1966 silver Mustang that my pops had built for me, and moving to New York City in 2005 after being accepted with a scholarship to the City University of New York, Hunter College. While in New York City, I managed to find a very small *comunidad de son jarocho*. There were no free *talleres*, and the *fandangos* were a rare occurrence. I longed to *zapatear en una tarima,* surrounded by *jaranerxs*, surrounded by *comunidad*. I was twenty-one-years old when I moved to New York City, and within the first few years, I had found a few

others who shared the longing I felt for *comunidad* through *son jarocho*. I started sharing the knowledge that had been shared with me at free weekly *tallers comunitarios* in the basement of a restaurant named Colors that was also a school where recent immigrants would learn about the food industry. Every Sunday at 4:00pm, once the brunch crowd had cleared out, we held *talleres* for about fifteen people of all ages. I carried my *jarana* on my back and lugged my *tarima* on two trains, across the Williamsburg Bridge, and into the lower east side, walking through snow and rain, because in that basement, I felt *en comunidad*.

Sadly, the space changed owners and we no longer had a place to host *talleres.* Born out of those talleres was the all *mujer*—female—*son jarocho* group, Son de Montón. I imparted as much as I could about *son jarocho* with these women and we played community events for free, sharing our love of *son jarocho* with anyone willing to listen. Shortly after, I found myself on stage, performing with the critically acclaimed Latin fusion band, Jarana Beat. Through new connections, we found a new space in a Latino barrio in Queens, La Terraza 7, to host the weekly *talleres* and eventually, monthly *fandangos.* People came all the way from Washington DC at first, and it wasn't long before people from far-away places all over the east coast started coming to New York City for the *fandangos.* Shortly after, I found myself traveling to Washington DC, sharing *son jarocho* and *creando comunidad a través de la cultura* with a collective of *jaranerxs* called Son Cosita Sería. In DC, *talleres* were being co-facilitated, and one of the facilitators was a fellow *SanTanero*, Salvador Sarmiento. We grew up together, dancing *ballet folklórico de niños,* and later playing *son* together in *los tallers* at El Centro Cultural in *SanTana*. The *comunidad de son* on the east coast was thriving with a Facebook group of over 600 members. Today, cities like Philadelphia even have their own blooming *son jarocho comunidad*—something that grew out of trips to New York and DC for *fandangos* and *talleres.*

After eight years in New York City of giving *talleres*, touring internationally with Jarana Beat, recording an album, working as a professional dancer and musician, I found myself at a crossroads. I had graduated from Hunter College with a bachelor of arts in Sociology and I felt ready to move on to the next chapter in my academic career. I wanted to go to grad school. I realized that the schools I wanted to attend were not in New York City; they weren't even on the east coast. I needed to make a decision—could I leave New York City, and the beautiful *comunidad* that I helped grow? It wasn't easy to leave New York City. The *comunidad de son jarocho* had become such a beautiful, thriving space. My want, my need to further my education helped me decide that I needed to leave and, although I still miss that *comunidad hermosa*, I know that all the ancestral knowledge I shared is alive and well. As someone who took *talleres* with me in NYC, said recently in response to a happy birthday post on Facebook, "*Muchas gracias Keli! Te extraño mucho! Aquí sigue tu semilla de bailadora!"* —Thank you so much, Keli! I miss you so much! The seed you planted as a bailadora lives on here! [35]

I decided that before moving to Texas for graduate school, I would go to *México* to reconnect with some of the elders and communities of s*on* in Veracruz. I sold most of my things, put the rest in storage, and went to Veracruz for my favorite time of year, *Las Pascuas.* I was there for the first *fandango* of the season, honoring La Virgen de Guadalupe on December 12, 2013 and I stayed all the way to the end of the season, until the last *fandango,* honoring La Virgen de La Candelaria on February 2. During those two months, I reconnected with so many amazing elders who shared their stories, their wisdom, and their *son* with me, renewing my commitment to want to share *son* with the Chicanx community in the U.S.

I moved to San Antonio, Texas in the summer of 2014 in anticipation of my fall 2015 start date as a graduate student in the Bicultural-Bilingual Studies Program at the University of

[35] Vicky Ramirez's Facebook reply to the author's post wishing her a Happy Birthday in 2016.

Texas at San Antonio. I was excited moving to San Antonio, because I knew several people from Texas that were part of a budding *son jarocho* community. My first few months in Texas were a bit of a culture shock, but I loved my new home. It wasn't long before I was invited to someone's home to play some *son jarocho*. They didn't call it a *fandango*, or the more informal get together a smaller *fandanguito*, or a *taller* even; they called it a "jam session." Being new in town, I just wanted to find a *comunidad*, people to share my love of *son jarocho* with, so I went even though I found it strange to be going to a "jam session."

As the weeks went on, I realized how different the community was here in San Antonio. There were never any *talleres*, so there was no way for anyone to learn anything new or bring someone new into the community. The jam sessions—as they called them—were always at someone's private residence during the week, very late in the evening, where only people who were invited by the host could attend. This was a very foreign and strange concept to me, a *comunidad de son* without *talleres*, a *comunidad* that hosted *fandangos* only in private places, where new community members could not gain access. I began to feel disillusioned, not at all in *comunidad.* Eventually, a few of the people in what had become the very exclusive community of *son jarocho*, began to ask me about my experience as a *jaranera*, and someone had even heard that I came from one of the largest *comunidades* of *son* in the U.S., *SanTana,* and that I had even lived in Veracruz. I was hesitant to share anything; I was afraid of how people might feel about me having so many years of experience in *son jarocho comunidades* throughout the U.S. and *México*.

Tensions grew high as I began to share my belief that *son jarocho* is for the c*omunidad* and should be accessible to all. Some people wanted to start a *taller* in a public place where we could advertise free *talleres* on Facebook so anyone off the street could attend. I could feel the

tensions rising as others were very reluctant to change and for weeks, I avoided the entire situation. Several events added fuel to the fire, and when I played *son jarocho* at a public performance as an invited guest, as an individual musician, tensions reached a breaking point. After a terrifying and heartbreaking community meeting, I had decided that I was not interested in beginning *talleres* in San Antonio. There were a few people in San Antonio who I had known before I moved to Texas—people who had taken *talleres* with me in different places throughout the country—who continued to water the seed of creating community *talleres*.

For several weeks, I turned down my *compañerxs*' requests to begin a *taller* in San Antonio. Even after they found a community center on the Eastside—the Southwest Workers Union—who was willing to open their space to us, I still refused. I had never encountered such resistance to want to share *son* with the *comunidad* publically. I didn't think I could move past this fear of trying to create a new space in the face of such opposition. I am blessed to have a *pareja*[36] who, having witnessed these events from afar dealing with personal family business, was ready to support me in whatever decision I made. When my *pareja* Cuauhtli returned to San Antonio—an amazingly talented musician in several genres, including *son jarocho*—he was willing to undertake what I saw as the most daunting task ever—starting the free community *talleres*. Together, he and I decided that it was time to start sharing the ancestral knowledge that so many elders had shared with us in Veracruz with the community of San Antonio.

In April of 2015, we offered our first free community *taller* and El Tallercito de Son SATX—The Little Workshop of Son SATX— was created. We began meeting on Fridays at 6:30pm at The Southwest Workers Union. One of the people who had pushed hard for the community *talleres* was community artist, Ernesto Cuevas, Jr. He created this image, which I

[36] Partner in terms of a romantic relationship (translation provided by author)

added text to on my IPhone, and this was the flyer that we used to announced the new *talleres* to the community:


Figure 2: El Tallercito's First Flyer

That first *taller* was perhaps the most terrifying endeavor I have undertaken since moving to Texas. I was so afraid of what those who disagreed with the new *talleres* would say about me. I was so afraid that I was going to make more enemies than friends. I was afraid that I was going to be isolated in this new place that I called home when all I longed for was *comunidad*. I was surprised when about ten people showed up, all eager and excited to learn *son jarocho*. For the next several months our community fluctuated in size. On average about twelve people came each week, in addition to myself and Cuauhtli. I gave *talleres de jarana* and *zapateado*; my *pareja* Cuauhtli gave *talleres de requinto y percusión*; and together, we gave *talleres de canto y versada.* Our community continued to grow, and after six months, we found ourselves moving to a new day to accommodate more people, and we even started free youth *talleres.*

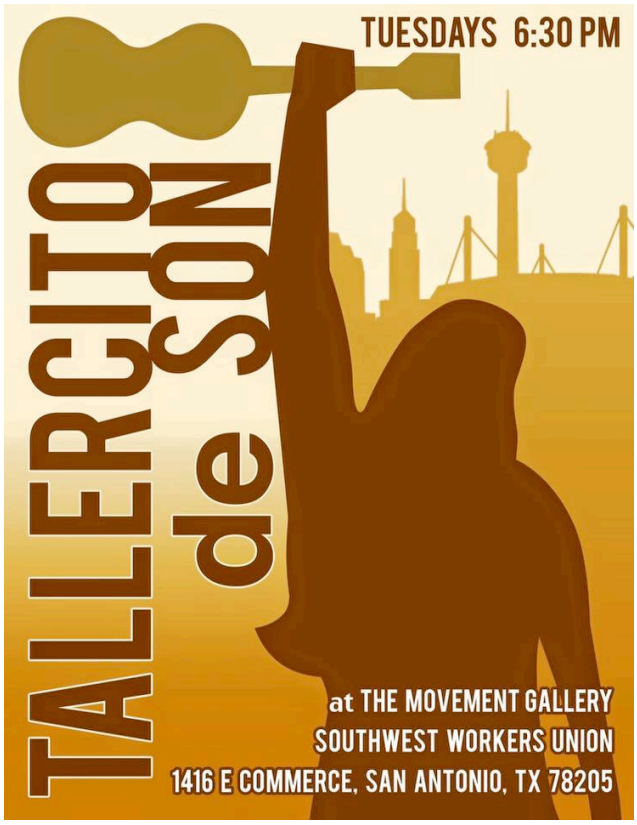

Figure 3: El Tallercito's Second Flyer by Ernesto Cuevas, Jr.

Figure 4: El Tallercito's First Youth Taller Flyer created by the Southwest Workers Union

We began hosting monthly *fandangos*, and celebrating the same *tradiciónes* that *comunidades* in Veracruz celebrate. We made an *altar comunitaro* for Día de los Muertos and

hosted a *fandanguito* potluck; we hosted a *fandango* for *La Navidad*; a *fandango* for Dia de los Reyes; and several other *fandangos* throughout the year—always for free, always open to the entire *comunidad.* We began fundraising monies to host visiting *maestros/as* who gave free *talleres* to the entire *comunidad de* San Antonio. We began going out into the community inviting them to our free *talleres* and *fandangos*. We found a new home on the Westside of San Antonio at San Anto Cultural Arts in December 2015, and our community grew to over 35 people in *talleres*, and over 200 community members came to our 2016 Día de los Muertos *fandango*, learning about *son jarocho*, and the power it has to change a community. We began *creando comunidad a través de la cultura*—creating community through culture.

As I entered graduate school here in San Antonio, and began the process of writing a thesis, I was lucky enough to have a team of professors who encouraged me to write about what I was passionate about, write about what I know. As I read books by Chicana feminists and decolonial scholars, it was as though my entire world shifted. Tejana queer Chicana feminist, writer, poet, and cultural theorist Gloria Anzaldúa (1983) wrote:

> We are ready for change.
>
> si se puede, que asi sea, so be it, estamos listas, vámonos.
>
> Now let us shift.
>
> contigo,
>
> gloria
>
> (p. 576)

Gloria Anzaldúa wrote this to me—at least that is what I thought the first time I read these words. "Now let us shift" has become somewhat of a mantra for me throughout the grueling graduate school process. I began to realize that even in my Chicanx focused classes, I

was not represented. After all these years, and all of this hard work, I still did not see myself. There were no *artivistas* telling the stories of how other Chicanxs are using the arts, specifically *cultura* as a tool in their lives. I began to realize just how special *son jarocho* is, what a powerful tool it can become in the creation of community.

As a first-generation Chicana scholar from the barrio, as an *artivista*, as a musician, as a dancer, as a performer, as a cultural bearer, I want to see myself in my classes, in the academy. If no one else will do it, then I will gather the stories of my *compañerxs*, and together we will document our *testimonios*. Our counter-narratives of how a group of Chicanxs in San Antonio is using their *cultura*, an indigenous afro-mestizo music from *México*, to not only reshape their individual identities, but to create community through *cultura*.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the following chapter, I include my overall plan and blueprint that I used when conducting this research project with the members of the collective El Tallercito de Son SATX. This research is an important addition to how Chicanx communities are documenting and researching their own histories, herstories[37], and theirstories[38]—their own counter-stories of self-made identity, and their reexamination of roots and *cultura.*

Several theoretical frameworks shape and inform this ethnographic research project. As a Chicana who began this entire endeavor with a want—no, a need—to share Chicanx stories, written by a Chicana, for the Chicanx community, I will rely heavily on Chicana feminist epistemologies. Chicana feminist scholars Dolores Delgado Bernal and Gloria Anzaldúa provide theoretical frameworks that will guide my research. Too often, indigenous voices are completely left out of academic and western writings. Decolonial indigenous frameworks will also inform my research, particularly Linda Tuhiwai Smith's indigenous research agenda. The arts have always played a crucial role in *El Moviemiento* Chicanx, and I will draw on the works of the father of Chicanx theatre, Luis Valdez—as well as other Chicanx scholars—to note the importance of the arts in social justice movements.

### A Chicana's Journey to Ancestral Knowledge and Research Praxis

It wasn't until graduate school that I began reading the works of Gloria Anzaldúa, Emma Pérez, Dolores Delgado Bernal, and other Chicana feminists that I came to realize just how valuable, just how important, just how necessary all of those trips to *México* were in my evolving identity and consciousness. It was as though *son jarocho* provided that "*aja*" moment of

[37] The author would like to note that "histories" includes the pronoun "his" as in male stories, it is important to create space for "herstories" stories that are "hers"
[38] The author would like to note that there are more than two genders, therefore it is important to create a space for "their" stories as well.

consciousness that Anzaldúa (2002) writes about (p. 540). *Son jarocho* became the vehicle through which I learned that all the knowledge that my ancestors have passed down from generation to generation—both spoken and unspoken, both learned and embodied—is powerful. Gloria Anzaldúa (2002) writes that "*conocimiento*…guides your feet along the path, gives you *el ánimo* to dedicate yourself to transforming perceptions of reality, and thus the conditions of life" (p. 540).

Although my ancestral roots in *México* are in Jalisco, with the indigenous people Los Huicholes, I have found deep ancestral and spiritual connections to *México* in the music, dance, and *cultura* of *son jarocho*. Through *son jarocho*, its *cultura* and traditions, the communities I became a part of, I transformed my perceptions of reality (Anzaldúa, 2002). The *conocimiento* that I have learned from my *abuelos y abuelas*, from the elders I have met while studying *son jarocho* in their communities not only shaped, but continues to shape and inform my want to create *comunidad* through *cultura*.

As a graduate student writing a thesis on *son jarocho* in San Antonio, *Tejas*, I look toward Dolores Delgado Bernal's (1998) Chicana feminist epistemology framework to document and analyze the ways in which Tallercito de Son SATX nurtures community, ever-evolving Chicanx identities, and social action as a music of resistance. Through the lens of Chicana feminist epistemology, my research is a reflexive and subjective investigation of "my history and that of the women [and men] I write about, a unique history that arises from the social, political, and cultural conditions of" Chicanxs (Delgado Bernal, 1998, p. 2). As I question what has come to be accepted as "official" knowledge, I realize that more often than not, that knowledge is centralized upon Western ideologies, often negating the realities of marginalized peoples. As such, Dolores Delgado Bernal's (1998) Chicana feminist epistemological framework is relevant

in this research as it centers ancestral, generational, and community knowledge, and values the *conocimiento* that each person holds, whose "experiences and realities are accepted as the foundation of knowledge" (p. 3).

In reclaiming our indigenous and afro-mestizo roots, *son jarocho* has become a tool to decolonize our identities. Five-hundred years of colonization by Spain and the U.S.—a process I refer to as (re)colonization—have erased much of our indigenous roots. Over five centuries, these colonial societies have forced us to assimilate to Western ideologies, negating any connection to our indigenous ancestors. In her work, Delgado Bernal (1998) writes that a Chicana feminist epistemology "maintains connections to indigenous roots by embracing dualities that are necessary and complementary qualities, and by challenging dichotomies that offer opposition without reconciliation" (p. 4). Navigating my own ancestral legacies, as well as those of the Chicanxs in El Tallercito, this research is "grounded in the rich historical legacy of resistance and translates into a pursuit of social justice in both research and scholarship" (Delgado Bernal, 1998, p. 5).

By exploring the history of *son jarocho* through my own lived experiences in the different communities throughout Veracruz—some of which I lived in for more than a year—over the past seventeen years, in addition to my lived experience as a Chicana navigating both sides of the border, I have a unique viewpoint that Delgado Bernal (1998) calls *cultural intuition* (p. 7). Cultural intuition "extends one's personal experience to include collective experience and community memory, and points to the importance of participants' engaging in the analysis of data" (Delgado Bernal, 1998, p. 7). The years I have spent learning and sharing with people in Veracruz, *México*, and building community across borders via the musical and cultural traditions of *son jarocho* have all contributed to my own cultural intuition.

The knowledge and experiences of my ancestors lives deep within me as a Chicana, creating ties between my past and present (Delgado Bernal, 1998). Through family storytelling, I carry within me the knowledge of my *bisabuela*—my great-grandmother—Eulogia, *una india Huichola*, with long silver braids that ran down either side of her face and hung well below her *faja,* always wrapped tightly around her waist. Through these *cuentos*, younger generations become guardians of ancestral knowledge. Delgado Bernal (1998) writes that:

> Through the experience of ancestors and elders, Chicanas and Chicanos carry knowledge of conquest, loss of land, school and social segregation, labor market stratification, assimilation, and resistance…This knowledge that is passed from one generation to the next can help us survive in everyday life by providing an understanding of certain situations and explanations about why things happen under certain conditions (pp. 7-8).

It is this knowledge—community and ancestral—that shapes and informs my research as a first-generation Chicana scholar.

As a graduate student, I have used my place of privilege to begin to document and analyze the experiences of Chicanxs in *son jarocho* from both Chicana feminist and indigenous perspectives. There have been very few spaces for me to explore how to go about conducing my research, and I have had to create my own spaces to grow, learn, and conduct research. Delgado Bernal (1998) writes: "How educational research is conducted significantly contributes to what and whose history, community, and knowledge is legitimated. A Chicana feminist epistemology addresses the failure of traditional research paradigms that have distorted or omitted the history and knowledge of Chicanas" (p. 14). Delgado Bernal, Anzaldúa, and other Chicana feminists, as well as indigenous scholars, have provided the theoretical framework and methodologies needed for me to place Chicanxs—their experiences, their realities, their ancestral knowledge—at the center of my research. My research documents the Chicanx experience from a Chicanx

perspective, exploring how *son jarocho* has become a tool in the remaking of their Chicanx identities.

### ***Testimonios*: A methodology to heal, to reclaim, to bring change**

Dolores Delgado Bernal (1998) wrote "what becomes crucial in a Chicana feminist epistemology goes beyond quantitative versus qualitative methods, and lies instead in the methodology employed and in whose experiences and realities are accepted as the foundation of knowledge," (p. 3). By collecting *testimonios*—counter-stories, counter-narratives that *lxs talleristas* will share about the injustices that they have faced as Chicanxs—we will document how El Tallercito de Son has come to play a role in the construction of identity, as well as how *son jarocho* has become a space for collective knowledge and a vehicle for social justice. Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, and Flores Carmona (2012) write that:

> *Testimonio* is and continues to be an approach that incorporates political, social, historical and cultural histories that accompany one's life experiences as a means to bring about social change through consciousness-raising…these *testimonios* demonstrate the possibility of social change and transformation of self and society (p. 364)

As *lxs talleristas* share and document their *testimonios* they will not only heal themselves, but will be documenting how *son jarocho* and El Tallercito have become vehicles for social change, as well as sites of transformation (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012).

Documenting the *testimonios* of *lxs talleristas* through the lens of Chicana feminist epistemologies, this research places their stories, their voices, at the center. Delgado Bernal (1998) writes that "a Chicana methodology encompasses both the position from which distinctively Chicana research questions might be asked and the political and ethical issues involved in the research process" (p. 3). Too frequently, Chicanx stories are recorded and documented by an outsider who often misrepresents Chicanx stories through incorrect analysis, lack of member checking, and other misrepresentations.

The Chicanx stories and counter-narratives documented in this research by a Chicana fully embody a Chicana methodology in that Chicanx voices are central to the research. As the *talleristas* navigate their ancestral indigenous afro-mestizo roots through the *música* and *cultura* of *son jarocho*, Chicana feminist epistemology "maintains connections to indigenous roots by embracing dualities that are necessary and complementary qualities, and by challenging dichotomies that offer opposition without reconciliation" (Delgado Bernal, 1998, p. 4). Delgado Bernal (1998) shares that a Chicana feminist epistemology "arises out of unique social and cultural history, and demonstrates that our experiences as Mexican women are legitimate, appropriate, and effective in designing, conducting, and analyzing research" (p. 6). Placing Chicanxs at the center of academic research validates their stories in the academy—also important to note is that this research is written by a Chicana, making this project by us, for us.

When looking towards the future of Chicanxs in the academy, for Delgado Bernal (1998) "in the future, we must look for additional strategies that provide opportunities for Chicanas and Chicanos to participate in the construction of knowledge and research that is dedicated to achieving social justice" (p. 16). It is my hope that this research—the *testimonios*, the count-narratives, and the stories shared by *lxs talleristas*—documents ways in which Chicanxs in San Antonio, TX participate in the construction of knowledge and research that is not only dedicated to achieving social justice for Chicanxs everywhere, but also a space to learn about our ancestors, heal from the pain of colonization, and create community through *cultura* (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012).

**Chicana Feminist Epistemology**

As a Chicana from the barrio, I have often felt that I live between two worlds, straddling a border (Anzaldúa, 1987). Chicanxs have always walked borders—geographical borders, political

borders, *fronteras culturales.* As Chicanxs in the borderlands, try to create and sustain *una comunidad* Chicanx, the driving motivation is simply to find a place where they feel *en casa*. Latino studies scholar and Chicano activist William V. Flores, and Rina Benmayor (1997) a migration and identity scholar, write about claiming identity and space explaining that Latinos want to "create a space where the people feel 'safe' and 'at home,' where they feel a sense of belonging and membership" (p. 15). Chicanxs too often face hostile environments when trying to find *comunidad, sentirse en casa*—the search for identity becomes a daunting task, full of hardships and riddled with rejection. Living in a place that is home, but isn't home, and being a part of a community that is yours, yet not, leaves one constantly feeling like an outsider. In a place where Chicanxs are increasingly made to feel as outsiders in their homeland, a place they were born and raised, it is not easy to find a home (Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Anzaldúa, 1987). Chicanxs are struggling to build community, claim social rights, and become recognized as active agents in this society they call home (Flores & Benmayor, 1997).

Too frequently, what Chicanxs encounter in their search for space, for *comunidad*, is closed doors and further silencing of Chicanx voices—the silencing of their history, of the Chicanx story. Chicana historian and decolonial theorist Emma Pérez (1999) writes:

> "Chicana/o history…will tend to follow traditional history's impulse to cover…the unheard, the un-thought the unspoken…that constitute the interstitial gaps. I argue that these silences, when heard, become the negotiating spaces for the decolonizing subject. It is in a sense where third space agency is articulated," (p. 5).

Chicanxs are currently in this in-between space, in the gap, what Pérez (1999) calls the "decolonial imaginary" (p. 6). El Tallercito has given a voice to Chicanxs whose stories have been lost in the time lag that exists between the colonial and the post-colonial, that which yet to come (Pérez, 1999).

**Nepantla: A place for Change**

"*Nepantla* is a way of reading the world…a way of creating knowledge and writing a philosophy, a system that explains the world. *Nepantla* is a stage that women and men, and whoever is willing to change into a new person and further grow and develop, go through." (Anzaldúa, 2007, p. 276).

In order to navigate the complexities of the Chicanx identity, I turn to Anzaldúa's understanding of *nepantla*. *Nepantla* is *una palabra indígena* that means the "in-between space, *el lugar entremedio, un lugar no-lugar*" (Anzaldúa, 2013, p. 577). El Tallercito de Son—and the Chicanxs who make up the collective—becomes *nepantla*, a home, a place of transformation where Chicanxs can question "the basic ideas…and identities inherited from your family, your education, and your different cultures" (Anzaldúa, 2013, p. 548). El Tallercito provides a space where through music and *cultura*, *talleristas* can (re)define themselves in terms of "who you are becoming, not who you have been" (Anzaldúa, 2013, p. 557). By collecting the *testimonios* of the *talleristas*, using Anzaldúa's *nepantla*, El Tallercito becomes a site where these reclamations, examinations, and defining of identities can be documented and shared—by Chicanxs, for Chicanxs.

*Nepantla* provides a space where Chicanxs can freely "slip between realities to a neutral perception." (Anzaldúa, 2013, p.569). Having these *nepantla* spaces are crucial to the reexamination and decolonizing of Chicanx identities. Anzaldúa (2013) writes that "A decision made in the in-between place becomes a turning point initiating psychological and spiritual transformations, making other kinds of experiences possible" (p. 569). El Tallercito de Son SATX provides this *nepantla* space where Chicanxs can share their *testimonios* from a place of transformation.

As a founding member of El Tallercito, and one of the facilitators of the learning and sharing of *son jarocho*, this research project is not only important to me, but it is a part of me. Before I ever even imagined that El Tallercito could be a research project, I was already observing talleristas, and the ways in which *son jarocho* and El Tallercito had transformative powers in their lives. It was as though my nearly two decades of experience learning, playing, and experiencing my own personal transformation through *son jarocho* had given me the tools to needed to not only share *son jarocho* with others, but to recognize the power it has to transform lives.

Growing up Chicana, I constantly straddled two borders. I navigated in and out of very different worlds, searched for my identity in two different lands. Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) writes about borderlands: "Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy" (preface). For many Chicanxs these borderlands are often riddled with contradictions—the long lasting effects of colonization and (re)colonization exists in their everyday lives.

As I navigate these borderlands with my *compañerxs*[39], my fellow *talleristas*, I have the privilege to be a graduate student. I recognize that this privilege of institutional knowledge comes with great responsibility to my community—knowledge doesn't belong to me; knowledge is meant to be shared. As a community activist, an *artivista*, as a Chicana *jaranera*[40], a Chicana *bailadora*[41], these are positions I am privileged to hold—my privilege affords me a voice at the

[39] *Compañerxs: Compañera/o* is the Spanish word for "companion," to the author it is a term of endearment for her closest friends. However, for the author, the use of the word with the "x," allows for more than two genders, just like the use of "x" in Chicanx.
[40] A woman who plays the *jarana*, the small string instrument used in *son jarocho* (authors personal knowledge)
[41] A woman who dances *zapateado,* percussion tap-like dancing that echoes the traditional drumming once outlawed by colonizing forces (authors personal knowledge)

*marchas,* my privilege has allowed me to learn and share this musical and cultural tradition that is *son jarocho.* I am honored to share the collective community knowledge that elders in communities throughout Veracruz, *México* have shared with me. El Tallercito de Son has become the vehicle to share this invaluable collective community knowledge, and as a *tallerista* myself, I am an insider.

**El Tallercito de Son: Using *Son Jarocho* as Decolonial Research**

Decolonial research is essential to this research project. I will turn to the Maori scholar of education and decolonial research, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, best known for her groundbreaking book, *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999) where she puts forth a vision for how research can be used a decolonial practice. Tuhiwai Smith (2012) identifies "research as a significant site of struggle between the interests and ways of knowing of the West and the interests and ways of resisting of the Other" (p. 2). Oftentimes, Chicanx stories are investigated, researched, and written by white people with a very Western and colonial way of thinking, writing, and documenting. For the purposes of this research project, Tuhiwai Smith's "Other" is the Chicanx. Tuhiwai Smith (2012) continues:

> Indigenous peoples across the world have other stories to tell which not only question the assumed nature of those ideals and the practices that they generate, but also serve to tell an alternative story: the history of Western research through the eyes of the colonized. These counter-stories are powerful forms of resistance which are repeated and shared across diverse indigenous communities. (p. 2)

For the purposes of this research, the "indigenous peoples" that Tuhiwai Smith refers to, are the (re)colonized Chicanxs—and our stories matter, our stories have value, our stories hold power.

Tuhiwai Smith (2012) introduces the indigenous research agenda, which she conceptualizes as "constituting a programme and set of approaches that are situated within the decolonization politics of the indigenous peoples' movement," (p. 120) and uses the metaphor of

an ocean tide as a simple representation of an indigenous research agenda. Tuhiwai Smith (2012) explains that:

> The tides represent movement, change, process, life, inward and outward flows of ideas, reflections and actions. The four directions named—decolonization, healing, transformation and mobilization—represent processes. They are processes which connect, inform and clarify the tensions…they are processes which can be incorporated into practices and methodologies. Four major tides are represented…as survival, recovery, development, and self-determination. They are the conditions and states of being through which indigenous communities are moving. (pp. 120-121).

Through an indigenous research agenda, indigenous people—here, Chicanxs—and their narratives, become central to research methodologies and practices.

Tuhiwai Smith (2012) states that the implications for indigenous research "seem to be clear and straightforward: the survival of peoples, cultures and languages; the struggle to become self-determining, the need to take back control of our destinies" (p. 143). Through the act of reclaiming, indigenous cultures have:

> required the mounting of an ambitions research programme, one that is very strategic in its purpose and activities and relentless in its pursuit of social justice…Within the programme are…themes such as cultural survival, self-determination, healing, restoration and social justice are engaging indigenous researchers and communities in a diverse array of projects (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 143).

Tuhiwai Smith (2012) presents 25 different projects currently pursued by indigenous communities and was deliberate with the naming of the projects she lists, hoping that "the message it gives to communities is that they have issues that matter, and processes and methodologies that can work for them" (p. 163). For the purposes of this study, I will use 13 of the projects and processes Tuhiwai Smith discusses as methodologies and methods throughout my research.

The first project I will use is *testimonio*. Similar to Chicana feminist Dolores Delgado-Bernal, Tuhiwai Smith (2012) writes that through *testimonios* "truth is being

revealed…indigenous testimonies are a way of talking about an extremely painful event or series of events" (p. 145). For Tuhiwai Smith (2012), *testimonios* become a "narrative of collective memory…a method for making sense of histories, of voices and representation and of the political narrative of oppression" (p. 145). The *testimonios* of *lxs talleristas* become a narrative of collective memory on identity and the role that *cultura* plays in the remaking of identity, as well as the use of *cultura* as a vehicle for social justice.

I will also draw from what Tuhiwai Smith (2012) calls claiming. Colonialism has invalidated indigenous people's language, cultural practices, and ancestral knowledge. By researching Chicanx stories, and writing our stories for our community, we use methodologies which relate to claiming and reclaiming (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 144). These stories and counter-narratives have a "focus and purpose…to establish the legitimacy of the claims being asserted…because they have been written to support claims…about past injustices," (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 122). For Tuhiwai Smith (2012), the teaching of these histories and counter-narratives is important because they "teach both the non-indigenous audience and the new generations of indigenous peoples an official account of their collective story" (p. 145). By collecting counter-narratives through *testimonios* from *lxs talleristas*, this research provides a space of claiming and reclaiming, where healing, decolonization, transformation, and mobilization can occur through indigenous research practices.

Tuhiwai Smith (2012) introduces story telling as "oral histories, the perspectives of elders and of woman…stories are a way of passing down the beliefs and values of a culture in the hope that the new generations will treasure them and pass the story down further," (pp. 145-146). For *lxs talleristas* of El Tallercito de Son, *son jarocho*—and the stories that elders have shared—becomes a way to "connect the past with the future, one generation with the other…and the

people with the story," (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 146). The stories that *lxs talleristas* share from their past also serve as oral histories that have shaped and informed their identity as Chicanxs.

Celebrating survival is Tuhiwai Smith's (2012) answer to non-indigenous research being "intent on documenting the demise and cultural assimilation of indigenous peoples. Instead it is possible to celebrate survival," (p. 146). *Son jarocho, el fandango,* and the community traditions, is a cultural celebration of not only indigenous culture, but the African legacies that are ignored in Mexican *cultura*. Tuhiwai Smith (2012) places importance on events and accounts "which focus on…active resistance are important not just because they speak to our survival, but because they celebrate our being at an ordinary human level and affirm our identities as indigenous" (p. 146) peoples. Through the sharing of *son jarocho* and its traditions with the Chicanx community of San Antonio, we can "retain cultural…values and authenticity in resisting colonialism" (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 146).

Tuhiwai Smith (2012) calls for a focus on indigenizing, which "centers a politics of indigenous identity and indigenous cultural action…and privileges indigenous voices," (pp. 147-148). By reclaiming African and indigenous identities through the learning of *son jarocho*—and participating in its traditions and cultural practices—*lxs talleristas* are creating a space for those living cultural legacies. By reclaiming these cultural practices, *lxs talleristas* are doing what Tuhiwai Smith (2012) calls revitalizing and regenerating, pointing out that "indigenous languages, their arts and their cultural practices are in various states of crisis" (p. 148). While Tuhiwai Smith (2012) discusses the ways in which languages are being revitalized, there is a lack of discussion as to how the arts and cultural practices are being revitalized and regenerated. Through my documentation in this research of how a group of Chicanxs in San Antonio, Texas, are revitalizing the indigenous and African cultural practices and traditions of *son jarocho*

through transnational relationships and cultural exchanges, I hope to do my part in filling this gap.

Tuhiwai Smith (2012) also notes the importance of connecting, of "making connections and affirming connectedness…Connectedness positions individuals in sets of relationships with other people…Connecting is related to issues of identity and place, to…relationships and community well-being" (pp. 149-150). El Tallercito uses *son jarocho* as a vehicle for connectedness, providing a direct tie to cultural roots and resistance in *México*. In the face of the struggles that indigenous communities have faced since colonization, Tuhiwai Smith (2012) calls for representation as "a political concept and…as a form of voice and expression" (p. 151). Throughout history, governments have long "made decisions hostile to the interests of indigenous communities," (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 152); for example, as previously discussed, *son jarocho* was outlawed by colonial governing forces through colonial edicts. To Tuhiwai Smith (2012), representation is also a "project of indigenous artists, writers, poets…and others who attempt to express an indigenous spirit, experience or world view" (p. 152).

Tuhiwai Smith's (2012) networking project has "become an efficient medium for simulating information flows, educating people quickly about issues and creating extensive international talking circles…building networks is about building knowledge...based on the principles of relationships and connectedness," (pp. 157-158). By bringing teaching artists from throughout Veracruz and *México*, El Tallercito provides opportunities for transnational networking. For Tuhiwai Smith (2012) "networking by indigenous people is a form of resistance...a way of making contracts between marginalized communities…a process which indigenous peoples have used effectively to build relationships and disseminate knowledge and

information" (p. 158). The networking that El Tallercito provides is a form of social resistance and social justice centered around cultural practices and traditions, music, and dance.

By revitalizing the traditions and practices of *son jarocho*, El Tallercito is protecting traditions that could be lost through continued (re)colonization. Protecting is a multi-faceted project that is "concerned with protecting peoples, communities, languages, customs and beliefs, art and ideas, natural resources and the things indigenous peoples produce," (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 159). Tuhiwai Smith (2012) links the survival of indigenous peoples with "the need to protect a way of life, a language and the right to make our own history" (p. 149).

*Son jarocho* is creating music and dance through living traditions. Tuhiwai Smith (2012) provides the project of creating to understand the importance that the arts hold in indigenous research: "creating is about transcending the basic survival mode through using a resource or capability that every indigenous community has retained throughout colonization—the ability to create and be creative" (p. 159). Creating through the continued tradition of playing *son jarocho* at community *fandangos* with El Tallercito becomes a way of resisting (re)colonization. Tuhiwai Smith (2012) explains that "throughout the period of colonization, indigenous peoples survived because of their imaginative spirit," (p. 160). *Son jarocho* embodies this creativity and imaginative spirit of the Afro-Indigenous populations of Veracruz.

El Tallercito has provided a space where Chicanxs from San Antonio use *son jarocho* as a vehicle for discovery. Tuhiwai Smith (2012) writes that to "discover the beauty of our knowledge" is about "discovering our own indigenous knowledge…and its continued relevance to the way we lead our lives" (p. 161). *Son jarocho* becomes the beautiful knowledge that *lxs talleristas* use to reshape and remake identity, and to reclaim cultural traditions and practices.

The final project that Tuhiwai Smith (2012) discusses is sharing, which is very appropriate and fitting when discussing El Tallercito de Son. Tuhiwai Smith (2012) writes that "sharing knowledge between indigenous peoples, around networks and across the world of indigenous peoples…contains views about knowledge being a collective benefit and knowledge being a form of resistance," (p. 163). Tuhiwai Smith (2012) describes sharing as the "responsibility of research…sharing is related to the failure of the education systems to educate…it is important for keeping people informed…it is a form of oral literacy," (p. 162).

Tuhiwai Smith (2012) calls on indigenous research to share as a way of "demystifying knowledge and information and speaking in plain terms to the community" (p. 162). It is my goal through this research to provide accessibility to my *comunidad*—both in the academy and outside of the institution of higher education—about the ways in which Chicanxs in San Antonio, TX are using *son jarocho*, its *cultura* and traditions not only as a tool for social justice, but to reshape, remake, and reclaim identities.

**Research Questions and Sub-Questions**

The research question that will be asked is "How has El Tallercito de Son SATX used traditional *son jarocho* music from Veracruz, *México* to 'create community' and identity amongst Chicanxs in San Antonio, Texas?" The sub-questions are "How has El Tallercito formed transnational communities and relationships with people in *México*? How have *lxs talleristas* used *son jarocho* and El Tallercito as a vehicle for social justice in their everyday lives? As a vehicle for other ways of producing collective knowledge?"

Focus groups or *pláticas*—informal conversations to share stories about specific ideas or topics—as we called them, included five to ten *talleristas*, lasting about an hour each, were held to help better understand and document El Tallercito as a grass-roots Chicanx collective. These

*pláticas* built on grounded theory as common themes arose in the *testimonio* interviews. All interviews and focus groups took place at San Anto Cultural Arts—the community center that houses El Tallercito, located in the heart of San Antonio's Westside barrio.

**Data: Collection Methods and Analysis**

Data is what makes or breaks a research project. Collecting, organizing, tracking, and analyzing the data are essential for conducting a successful research project. Marshall and Rossman (2016) write that "researchers should think of data as something to cuddle up with, embrace, and get to know better," (p. 217). I mapped out a plan to manage the data from the interview *testimonios* and *pláticas* that ensures all data is handled ethically, and available for review by *lxs talleristas*.

Each *tallerista* who shared their *testimonios* in interviews and *pláticas* has become such an integral part of the collective, and as a part of the group, has received attention from the local community. The *testimonios* that the *talleristas* shared are powerful, and it is important to me to keep their stories as genuine and true to life as possible. For these reasons, I wanted their identities to remain true, using their real name and any in-depth details they share . Each *tallerista* was given the option to remain anonymous and provide a pseudonym that would be used in the final publication, however all the *talleristas* wanted to use their true identity.

Each *tallerista* shown in photographs has signed an informed consent form, giving their permission to be interviewed and/or shown in photographs and/or film. Each *tallerista* who signed a consent form was informed that they were free to withdraw from the research project at any time—without any consequence or retribution. For *talleristas* who chose to not participate in the research project, their acceptance and participation in El Tallercito did not change, they were not affected—they continue to be present as *talleristas* in El Tallercito's community, they simply

do not appear in photographs, nor were they interviewed or asked to participate in *pláticas*. These consent forms, along with the recorded data, were kept under lock and key at the San Anto Cultural Arts Building, where the research project took place.

After the interviews took place, I wrote analytic memos, where I noted reflections, thoughts, and insights about the interview (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 221). These memos were made available to the participants for review. After each *testimonio* was completed, I transcribed the work. All *talleristas* interviewed are self-identified Chicanxs or Latinxs, who speak in Spanglish and code-switch fluently. I provided any needed translation or cultural definitions, with the assistance and final approval of the *tallerista* who was interviewed.

The *talleristas* that shared their *testimonio* through interviews were selected from the collective members of El Tallercito. All members will be invited to participate in the *pláticas*. Through self-identification, as well as recruitment, four of the most consistent *talleristas* were interviewed and shared their *testimonios,* and made up the majority of the data collected. Each *tallerista* shared their *testimonio* over the course of one to three in-depth one to two hour interviews. I have chosen *testimonios* to document our stories, because the spoken words of the *testimonio* holds power. As previously mentioned, the very nature of a *testimonio* brings about social change through raising awareness and consciousness (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Flores Carmona, 2012). As *lxs talleristas* shared their *testimonios*, we created a space for self-healing, self-transformation, and self-love. Each interview will be recorded with a voice recorder, as Seidman (2013) notes "in-depth interviews should be recorded" (p. 117) and preserve the words of the co-researcher who was interviewed.

As data was collected and transcribed, I reduced the transcribed text, using brackets to note important themes. As the graduate student who compiled the data, I looked at the

transcriptions from the different interviews, and began to reduce the data, marking individual passages in the transcriptions to begin to pull themes, recurring feelings, and emotions (Seidman, 2013). As these themes and recurring feelings and emotions arose, I used a grounded theory approach, comparing the viability of themes and explanations against the data collected (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). By reading the interview transcript line by line, I coded passages through category generation, creating the codes as they unveiled themselves in the data. I then created clusters and used conceptual mapping, such as mind maps, to group themes into clusters for analyzing and interpretation. Having organized data that is coded well allowed me to bring meaning and coherence to themes, patterns and categories that are a part of our realities. Throughout the entire process, the data was always available to the individual who shared their *testimonio,* allowing for member checking.

**Limitations of this Research Study**

While this particular research study aims to document how El Tallercito de Son SATX and its members, *lxs talleristas*, have used *son jarocho* to create community and identity amongst Chicanxs in San Antonio, Texas, it will by no means apply to all Chicanxs. Nor will this research reflect the ways in which different Chicanx communities throughout the U.S. embody, experience, and share *son jarocho* and its musical and cultural traditions. While the construction and self-making of Chicanx identities is important in each community, this research study aims to document the particular experiences of a group of Chicanxs who form the collective El Tallercito de Son in San Antonio, *Tejas.*

## CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Peoples' stories hold power. The words that are chosen when sharing, the pauses, the far-off stares as one remembers, are all essential to how people remember history, how they tell their story, and how they construct identity. As people share their stories—stories of love, heartbreak, and of colonization, injustices and discrimination—as a community, how do we record these stories? What are the best practices to honor and cherish these stories, these *testimonios*—counter-stories or counter narratives, that give witness to social injustice (Marshall & Rossman, 2016)—ensuring that future generations can share in the wisdom of their ancestors? How can a community convey that these *testimonios* are a way to decolonize knowledge, a way to fight back against oppression, that these counter-stories are powerful forms of resistance (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012)?

Through their *testimonios*, *lxs talleristas* shared what being Chicanx in 2017 in San Antonio, Texas means. Together, their *testimonios* provide invaluable insight into how Chicanxs today self-identify, and the factors that shape their Chicanx identity. The *plática* focus group sessions solidified and reaffirmed what *lxs talleristas* shared in their *testimonios.* These *testimonios*—whether in a one-on-one interview or in a group *plática*—became a place of sharing, empowerment, affirmation, and healing. Several of my *compañerxs* discussed that "*aja*" moment—that guiding moment that helps transform perceptions of reality—what Anzaldúa (2002) refers to as *conocimiento*.

Although there were several themes that emerged during interviews and *pláticas*, for the purposes of this study, I will focus on seven reoccurring intersecting themes that were constant throughout each of the *testimonios* and *pláticas.* My findings are broken down accordingly into the following seven sections: Chicanx identity, *son jarocho*, El Tallercito, social justice,

transnationalism, academic representation, and youth and future generations. Chicana feminist epistemologies, versions of *nepantla*, and intersectional points of the thirteen indigenous research projects were important to *lxs talleristas*—as a graduate student, I was able to see the connections in their *testimonio*s and the theories and methodologies (Anzaldúa, 2012; Delgado Bernal, 1998; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012).

### ***Lxs Talleristas*: An Introduction**

Four *talleristas* shared their *testimonio* through one-on-one interviews, and of the 13 *talleristas*—myself included—who participated in the three *pláticas*, I will introduce the eight that have shared their *testimonio* in this research. As members of El Tallercito who are present in the community, and known as a *talleristas*, each *tallerista* has agreed to use their real name, without pseudonyms, sharing freely the details of their experiences as *talleristas*. These *talleristas* shared their stories *de todo corazón*[42] and without fear, reclaiming their ancestral voices and revealing such intimate details of their lives.

Table 1: *Tallerista Testimonios* and *Pláticas*

| Data Type | Participants | Length |
|---|---|---|
| *Testimonio* Interviews<br>1-3 Sessions Each *Tallerista* | Cuauhtli Reyna<br>Johanna Briones<br>Isaac Garcia<br>José Luis González | 60-120 minutes |
| *Pláticas*<br>3 Focus Group Sessions | Aimee Villarreal, Cindy Zavala<br>Jen Negrete, Angela Tarango<br>Ricardo Briones, Cuauhtli Reyna<br>Johanna Briones, José Luis González<br>Julián Villarreal, Albert Moreno<br>Lupe Segura, Isaac Garcia<br>Keli Rosa Cabunoc Romero | 45-50 minutes |

[42] With all their heart (translation provided by author)

Sharing during the *pláticas* were *talleristas*:

Dr. Aimee Villarreal, the director of the Comparative Mexican American Studies Department at Our Lady of the Lake University, from the Pueblo peoples of Nuevo *México*, who began her journey with *son jarocho* as a way "to never be lonely." Cindy Zavala, a newcomer to San Antonio, has been playing *son jarocho* for several years, and was a member of the collective *Son Cosita Seria* in Washington DC—I gave *talleres* to *los cositas* for years during my time in New York City. *La señora* Guadalupe Segura, or as *lxs talleristas* affectionately call her, Doña Lupe, is a mother and grandmother born in *México*, whose children identify as Chicana/o, and has been a member of the collective for just over a year. Jen Negrete is a Chicana who came to El Tallercito about a year ago, eager to fulfill a goal she had for years: learning to play the *jarana*. Ricardo Briones, started coming to Tallercito when he fell in love with—and married—*tallerista* Johanna, and has been an active member of the collective for about nine months. Dr. Angela Tarango, a tenured professor at Trinity University, began her journey of reclaiming *el Español* through *son jarocho* as a member of El Tallercito about a year and half ago. Julián Villarreal had been an avid student of *son jarocho* for many years before becoming a member of El Tallercito in the early beginnings back in April of 2015. Albert Moreno reconnected with his Mexican roots through the *cultura* of *son jarocho* when he joined the collective just over two years ago.

Sharing their *testimonio* through in-depth one-on-one interviews were the following four *talleristas*:

**Cuauhtli Reyna**

Cuauhtli is a founding member of El Tallercito and co-facilitates the weekly *talleres* with me. He traces his family roots back to Texas, when it was "still *México*," and to Coahuila,

*México*. Cuauhtli began his journey with *son jarocho* at the age of 17, when Mono Blanco—renowned traditional *son jarocho* group from Veracruz, *México*—visited his hometown during his high school years. He was born in Del Rio, Texas; a small town along the border between *Tejas* and Coahuila, *México*. He grew up with a mother who used the words Tejana and Chicana interchangeably, but noted that "Tejano was to explain where we were from, and Chicano was to explain our state of mind." Cuauhtli says of his hometown:

> There's a lot of people in Del Rio that were first generation and they didn't have a clear identity because their parents were too busy working. They were too busy trying to make it. And so, they had to find their own identity.

Cuauhtli has been a student of *son jarocho* for roughly fifteen years, and spent years living in Veracruz, *México*. During his time as a practitioner of *son jarocho*, Cuauhtli has mastered the *requinto jarocho*, spending weeks at a time studying with different elders learning several regional styles. He has spent the last two and a half years teaching *requinto* and *son jarocho* to *lxs talleristas*, sharing the ancestral knowledge he has learned.

**Johanna Briones**

Johanna, a native to San Antonio, is studying Mexican American Studies at San Antonio College. Johanna first heard *son jarocho* two years ago, when she saw El Tallercito perform at the city of San Antonio's Día de Los Muertos celebration, Muertos Fest. She and her daughter fell in love with the music, and El Tallercito has become a family affair for Johanna—she, her husband Ricardo, and her daughter Annabelle attend Tallercito weekly together as a *familia.* She identifies as a Chicana who although has a white father, was "raised in a first-generation immigrant household. My mom was an immigrant from Monterrey, *México*. She came over, and then I stayed with her the whole time. That's how I grew up, with all my Mexican family."

**Isaac Garcia**

Isaac is a queer Chicano vegan born in San Juan, Texas, in the Rio Grande Valley. He shared that growing up:

> I didn't always call myself a Chicano. Growing up in South Texas is interesting because you would think you would have such educational exposure to Chicanismo and the Mexican Civil Rights Movement and all these things, but it was sort of just brushed over, and you had to *really learn* about being a Chicano, and learn about civil rights, and all those things on your own. I feel like it was kind of always in the backdrop because of the situation that I lived in being a lower income family living along the border. It was in college when I learned about it.

He has been a member of El Tallercito for just about two years, having heard *son jarocho* for the first time at an art festival in the valley several years ago. Isaac came to El Tallercito first as an onlooker who brought vegan treats to *fandangos*, but never seemed too want to play. After six months of "just watching," Isaac began playing *jarana*, singing *versos*, and learning *zapateado*.

**José Luis González**

José Luis was born in Ocotlán, Jalisco, a *pueblo* southeast of Guadalajara. José Luis came to the United States after his father found work:

> *Llegué a los estados unidos a través de mi padre, porque trabajó en el campo. Como era jornalero, se venía y se iba, y ya cuando se decidió quedarse aquí en los estdos unidos, fue los principios del 1986 y ya nos trajó a nosotros en el 1987 ó 1988. Yo tenía como ocho años.*[43]

José Luis spent his childhood in Los Angeles, then moved to Ontario, California and stayed there until moving to San Antonio "*por el amor*," for love, when he married his wife. He first learned about *son jarocho* and El Tallercito two years ago when he saw a Facebook post about some free *talleres* for kids, so he took his two daughters to the classes. He remembers falling in love with

[43] I came to the United States because of my father, he worked in the fields. Since he was an unskilled laborer, he would come and go, and when he decided to stay here in the United States, it was the beginning of 1986, and then he brought us in 1987 or 1988. I was about eight. (translation provided by the author)

*son jarocho* at their first *taller,* "*hubo el primer taller de niños, y es cuando me interesó mucho, y empecé a traer a mis niñas, y ya de ahí, me enamoré más yo que ellas."*[44]

**Chicanx Identity: A Political Coming of Age Story**

All the *talleristas* felt it important to mention—several times—that the Chicanx identity is an identity that is realized through a journey, is a political statement, and is an aesthetic. It was as though Anzaldúa's (2012) *conocimiento* guided each of their individual journeys to Chicanx identity; and through this journey, the *talleristas* can transform "perceptions of reality, and thus the conditions of life" (p. 540). Cuauhtli spoke about the struggles that Chicanxs face with their identity:

> Identifying as a Chicano is not having your identity clearly handed to you…having to struggle with your parents over who you are. Having to struggle with your family over who you are. They struggled to find their identity and they did it by calling themselves Chicanos…because *lucharon*.[45]

Although he didn't necessarily struggle for his Chicano identity, growing up in a house where his mother identified as a Chicana herself, Cuauhtli stresses the importance of solidarity within the Chicanx identity:

> I didn't see myself as somebody who had to struggle to get my identity. I identified as Chicano when I was around other Chicanos. Chicano is solidarity, a movement, the state of mind. It was like the *penacho*[46] I put on to go into war, like a coat of arms, like a uniform. The Chicano is the *guerrero*[47], the person who will take action to give rights to their fellow Mexican-Americans.

Cuauhtli's identity as a Chicano is closely related to struggling, *la lucha*—the fight—to come into being a Chicano; much like cultural studies scholar Urrieta (2009) noted "The understanding of identity...is one of becoming, not being," (p. 69), Cuauhtli emphasizes the

[44] There was the first taller for kids, and that is when I became very interested, and I started bringing my girls, and from there, I fell in love more than they did. (translation provided by the author)
[45] they fought (translation provided by the author)
[46] The traditional headdress worn by indigenous Mexica peoples for war and other types of ceremonies and for ceremonial purposes.
[47] Warrior (translation provided by the author)

struggle that comes with finding one's Chicanx identity. José Luis still finds himself in that struggle,

> *Yo soy entre Chicano y Mexicano porque yo nací en México, entonces soy Mexicano de nacimiento, entonces como ya estoy de este lado del charco, se puede decir pos medio Chicano. Cuando digo 'de este lado del charco' es por el Río Bravo pues porque es lo que divide en dos países lo que es un solo país en mi punto de vista, es un solo país, no hay barreras pero...si tenemos que brincar el puente como quien dice, por eso yo lo digo.*[48]

José Luis finds himself still struggling with his identity, he sees himself as only "sort of" Chicano, "*medio Chicano*." He is navigating the world of Anzaldúa's (2012) *nepantla* as he explores the different levels of his identity, as he grows and transforms.

Echoing Cuauhtli's idea of Chicanxs being people who "*lucharon*," people who fought, José Luis believes that, *"El término Chicano, como yo lo veo, son luchones pues. Que luchan por los derechos de otras personas. Actualmente luchan por una causa o están involucrado con la comunidad."*[49] For *lxs talleristas*, being Chicanx means being political, having a struggle and fighting for their community.

Being Chicanx also means fighting against assimilation. In a society where assimilating to main-stream culture is encouraged, for Johanna, being Chicana is a way to reclaim her roots, her way to fight against assimilation. Before identifying as a Chicana, Johanna would say that she was "half white, half Mexican" but she noted how strange it felt saying that because "it's not really saying anything. I don't feel white; I don't feel Mexican." Johanna only recently began identifying as a Chicana:

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[48] I am in between Chicano and *Mexicano* because I was born in México, so I am Mexican by birth, but since now I am on this side of the puddle, you can say that I am sort of Chicano. When I say 'this side of the puddle' it's because of the Rio Grande, well because it is what divides into two countries what is only one in my point of view, it's one country, there are no barriers, but we do have to jump the bridge, as they say, and that is why I say it. (translation provided by the author)

[49] The term Chicano, as I see it, well, they are people who fight. That fight for the rights of other people. They currently fight for a cause, or they are involved with the community. (translation provided by author)

> It wasn't until a couple years ago that I was like I'm Chicana. And I even asked around, like what makes someone a Chicana, and it's a little bit being of Mexican descent living in the United States, but it's also political. A term to reclaim your roots and to have more pride. It comes with a little bit more pride, I think, being Chicana.

By Johanna reclaiming her roots, she is embracing through Chicana feminist epistemology the dualities that are necessary to deconstruct and navigate the complexities of the society we live in today (Delgado Bernal, 1998). Johanna's Chicana identity is also a way for her to reject the popular belief that everyone should assimilate, even in the face of negative connotations:

> Being a Chicana means determined not to assimilate. This is who I am, I'm going to be a Chicana even though you look down on this—which Chicana is a word that used to be looked down on, and we reclaimed it as something that we take pride in. We are OK with being Mexican, and in fact we are proud of it.

Johanna's pride in her Mexican heritage and her Chicana identity grounds her, making it a political stance against society's cries for assimilation.

For Isaac, being Chicano is "definitely political," and a major part of his identity, sharing that "even if I am subtle about it, it's always there, you're always going to see the Chicanismo." He mentions the importance of the Chicano aesthetic as a part of his identity:

> It is even an aesthetic…like that flag over there, the UFW flag. I have it up there because of all the history that symbol means, and it's important to me as well. And whether I knew it or not at the time, I was kind of invisibly wearing that flag because my parents went to the fields, and they worked in the fields. That symbol represents not just a history of Chicano people, but my history too, because I was there in the fields with my family. It was very common in the Valley, because the only kind of work for uneducated brown people was labor jobs.

For Isaac, Chicano symbols hold value and meaning, and help him celebrate the survival of his family (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Johanna also spoke about the Chicanx aesthetic and the importance in Chicanx identity:

> Before, I feel like I was always looking for the latest fashion. That is the first thing that people see about you. And I already had a few shirts, *pues blusas*, that were from *México* that have an *estilo* of embroidery. Then I came to Tallercito, and I started to learn, then I started performing, I would buy more of the traditional Mexican clothing, and I have

> always thought it was so beautiful. So now that I own a bunch of it for the Tallercito events, little by little it has creeped into my daily wear. It is just what I wear now. I feel much more comfortable now with who I am, and being Chicana speaks more to me now than ever.

There is a definite need for research on the Chicanx aesthetic, both in personal style and the style that surrounds your life—the sticker on your laptop or car, the artwork hanging on your walls, the symbols that are plastered all over your everyday items.

Isaac also noted the struggle that comes with Chicano identity, and the impact our family history has on our identities today:

> You hear stories of migration and you hear stories of struggle from your elders, and it's still all the same. Like everything is still going on, and well my relatives were dealing with this, and now I am dealing with this.

Through storytelling from his ancestors, Isaac feels a connection through the common struggles that they have experienced across time (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). As Isaac shared his newfound love of *son jarocho* with his family, he learned more about his family's history than he ever had:

> Now when I hang out with my mom, I take my *jarana* and I play some *sones* and she will tell me stories of my grandpa. Like, for instance he is from Xalapa, Veracruz, and got married in California and brought his wife to Veracruz. And one of the things they would fight about was him being out at the *fandangos* all the time. And they're just little whatever stories, but they are like memories. It is very grounding. I found out I had family that is from Veracruz, and I didn't even know about it. I mean, I am just so disconnected from my family that I didn't care to ask about my mom's side of the family. I kind of wasn't interested. But because of *son jarocho*, I had that conversation with my mom.

The stories that Isaac's mother shared with him, have helped Isaac to feel more grounded as he navigates *nepantla* (Anzaldúa, 2012), a place where Chicanxs can explore, examine and reshape their identities in transformative ways.

For *lxs talleristas* who shared their *testimonios,* Chicanx identity is still very much consciously and critically assumed (Alarcón, 1990). It is a personal journey, riddled with struggle—a struggle in which one of the *talleristas* still find themselves. The Chicanx identity is

also a political *guerrerx*[50], Chicanxs are *luchones,* people who fight assimilation, people who fight for the rights of their community. The Chicanx identity is still a cultural revolution, that early Chicano scholar Elihu Carranza wrote and theorized about in 1978.

### ***Son Jarocho*: A Vehicle for Change**

For each of *lxs talleristas*, *son jarocho* has been a vehicle for personal change. Many described *son jarocho* as a vehicle for examining and exploring their *cultura* through indigenous and African legacies in *México*. For the *talleristxs, son jarocho* has become the gateway to lost rituals and traditions like Día de los Muertos. For some *talleristas*, *son jarocho* has changed the way they communicate with others. *Son jarocho*—the space El Tallercito provides—has changed the way that Chicanxs build comunidad in San Antonio.

For Cuauhtli, *son jarocho* has helped him with some very personal struggles:

> I am very much an introvert. I am super anti-social. But, I found myself able to converse with people through *son*. I can't approach people, I don't approach people, I don't make new friends, I don't go out and meet new people. I don't, it just doesn't happen. But, you don't have to do all that in *son*. You go up to a *fandango*, and you just go up y *vas afinando, y vas tocando*[51]. You know, you stay out in the periphery as much as you want to, or you get into it as much as you want to. And it gives you this freedom to communicate in levels. Especially with people I do not know. And having a tool like this to be able to use, my way of expressing myself most fluently to somebody else, and being able to have them relate back, is…well it's much more than an icebreaker.

Through *son jarocho,* Cuauhtli has changed the way he communicates with people. The *fandango* provides the freedom to communicate in levels that are comfortable for him. The *convivencia*—a word that literally means coexistence, but more than that, it means to be in community with others around you, to truly be present, invested, and share in the spirit of community—that is experienced through the community atmosphere that a *fandango* creates is what helps Cuauhtli past his anti-social tendencies. He shared:

[50] Warrior, using "x" as a gender neutral ending, allowing all genders to be warriors. (translation provided by the author)
[51] You tune, and you play (translation provided by the author)

> All the little *convivencias* that you have in a *fandango* that all the sudden you just, as an anti-social person have just become prepared for and launched into. And there is a lot of people that without the *fandango*, or without *son*, like I wouldn't have a connection to. And not just in *México*, but here also. Almost anywhere in *México*, DF south, somebody catches you with a *jarana,* and you've got a free ride, or a free place to stay, or whatever. Just because you're part of the *tradición*. You're playing, and you're helping it grow. There is already this sort of element of thankfulness that somebody else is actually helping it along.

*Son jarocho* has provided Cuauhtli with a way to connect to other people, as well as a way to feel connected with others through the preservation of this cultural tradition that's resisted erasure by (re)colonization.

The community *convivencia* that *son jarocho* provides has impacted Cuauhtli's identity: "*Son* has become part of my identity because it is a community music. It is a way to link with other people." Feeling connected to others is related to not only identity and relationships, but to the well-being of a community as well (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). *Son jarocho* becomes the common thread through which Cuauhtli feels connected to people, both as an individual and as an individual who is part of something larger—helping *la tradición* grow. For Cuauhtli, growing *la tradición* of *son jarocho* has always been a priority. Cuauhtli shared his experiences when he first began to learn *son*:

> When I started learning how to play, the first thing that somebody asked me was like oh well, what do you want to do with this, and I was like I want to learn how to play every instrument possible, and teach everybody how to play it. And they were like, that's kind of a big goal. Maybe, but the whole point being, I wanted everyone to be able to enjoy what I knew as a *fandango*. What I knew as this community gathering, where you don't have to say a word to somebody, and you get to know them, better than somebody you're stuck in a room with for hours.

Sharing *son jarocho* and *la tradición* is how Cuauhtli uses collective knowledge that was shared with him to benefit other Chicanxs in search of roots and ancestral knowledge (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012).

*Tallerista* Johanna believes that music is a form of communication, "You are able to converse through the music, and even if you're shy, you have something to talk about. The music itself is a form of communication, and everybody feels connected by their roots." *Tallerista* Jen agrees sharing, "Music unites people. It touches people. Music is an international language. Tallercito and *son jarocho* have exposed me to a whole new world. It's amazing how close-knit *son jarocho* family is." Much like Cuauhtli, Jen feels a connectedness to people through *son jarocho*, through music. *Son jarocho* has opened a whole new world for Jen, one filled with music and family.

Several other *talleristas* mentioned family when discussing their experiences with *son jarocho*. Isaac said, "It's like a family, it's like being connected to a family, and having relatives and friends. *Son jarocho* is a family, and everyone is just related to it in different ways." José Luis shared that "*El son es cultura y tradición, y más que nada es familia.*"[52] *Lxs talleristas* have found a chosen family in *son jarocho*, people that they are connected to on several levels through music, dance, *cultura,* and *tradición*.

For Cindy, *son jarocho* has been the vehicle through which she has found a community, a support system while dealing with the trials and tribulations of a new home, away from her family for the first time:

> *Son jarocho* definitely builds community, and at this point, its national. I just moved to San Antonio, and the second that I arrived, I already had a community to arrive to. Through *son jarocho* I have been able to visit Chicago, New York, LA; and everywhere I go, I automatically feel *en familia*, because everywhere I go, *jaraneros* share this common value of *convivir*, like we are here just to share. We aren't about shows, or presentations, and yes, we do that sometimes to expose our different *talleres,* but at the end of the day our focus is to be a *taller*, to be able to teach people, to be able to provide classes for free. And so, I think it's a beautiful thing to be able to arrive to any city where you don't know anyone, and automatically have a connection through *son*. And you all have been super welcoming to me, and I want to thank you all for that. because I think that, if I would have arrived to San Antonio not having the Tallercito, I would have not

[52] *Son* is *cultura* and tradition, and more than anything, it is family. (translation provided by author)

> known anyone, like not had friends, like the entire transition would have been harder. And back home, when I was in DC, I was part of another *taller Son Cosita Seria*, that was our *taller*. That is where I felt *en familia*[53] outside of my *familia*. It was definitely a political space for me, and Tallercito is too. The second I got here, I think it was the César Chávez march, and so already we were like all playing, and there is that political aspect to it. I appreciate that the Tallercito has that root, that same root of social justice.

Cindy's *testimonio* shows how truly powerful the sense of *comunidad*, community, is. Moving to a new place is filled with difficult transitions, *son jarocho* and El Tallercito have provided Cindy with a *familia* to support her, all through this beautiful connection of *son*.

Johanna heard *son jarocho* for the first time just as she was beginning a journey to find her roots:

> I will never forget the first time I heard *son jarocho*. It was when I was starting to get back into my roots as an adult, and I was starting to recognize, there is more to it. Día de los Muertos, to be honest, nobody really celebrated it in my family. But there was a Muertos Fest and I was real curious about it because that is part of our culture as Mexicans. So, I went to the festival and I heard y'all playing the music, and saw my daughter dancing the whole time, and I was just like wow this music is so beautiful and the *versos* that y'all were saying, the verse and the lyrics. I am a poetic person and I used to like to write poetry, and I hadn't written in a while, but that used to be my thing. I really connected with it, especially because it sounded like traditional Mexican music.

*Son jarocho* came into Johanna's life at a time when she was journeying through her own version of *nepantla* (Anzaldúa, 2012), searching for a way to grow, *conocimiento* (Anzaldúa, 2002) guiding her in her search for her roots.

For Johanna, *son jarocho* fueled her search for roots, her want to reshape and remake her identity:

> *Son jarocho* has impacted my identity. Before I came into *son jarocho*, I was already starting to dabble with like OK this is my identity, let me look more into it, but I feel like *son jarocho* pulled me in full throttle.

[53] in family (translation provided by author)

*Son jarocho* provided the space Johanna needed to shape her identity into who she is becoming, El Tallercito became her *nepantla* (Anzaldúa, 2012). Johanna shares how *son jarocho* has unintentionally made its way into her everyday life:

> *Son jarocho* has become a part of my life. I listen to it a lot. I go on these bike rides, and a lot of days I find myself listing to *son*, hoping that I hear a new *son*, or hear a *son* that we recently have been working on. So, *son* has somehow ended up in all my playlists, and I always end up listening to *son* even when I don't mean to.

Whether meaning to or not, *son jarocho* has become the soundtrack to her search for roots, and subsequently, a part of her everyday life and identity.

For *tallerista* Albert, *son jarocho* has also played a role in his search for roots, longing for a *cultura* lost to him:

> Once I found out what the history and the culture was of *son*, that is when I was like oh, this is great. Because those kind of cultural norms that I had forgotten and lost, were now coming full circle back to where I came from, and that culture. *Son* for me is now kind of building a foundation for future traditions to pass onto my family that were available to me, but I didn't take advantage of…until now.

Albert shares the importance of reconnecting to his cultural roots, coming full circle, as he calls it. *Son jarocho*, all its traditions and *cultura,* is helping Albert to rediscover the beauty of his roots (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012), and providing a foundation for future family traditions. Traditions and rituals are something that *lxs talleristas* longed for as they searched for connections their roots. Isaac finds ritual and routine in *son jarocho*:

> It gives a sense of ritual. This ancestral ritual that we are all doing. Like the struggle is a ritual, because we all have to partake in the struggle. It gives me a routine. Without being spiritual, it's very meditative. Like I can meditate and by meditate, I mean sit and think, and it does connect us.

*Son jarocho* becomes meditation, a place to sit and think, reflect on the struggles, finding what connects us to each other (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). *Tallerista* Aimee also finds some much-needed spirituality and comfort in *son jarocho* during a difficult political climate:

> I don't remember which one of the maestros said to us "*bienvenidos a la perdición que es el son*"[54] and he was right. I could pick up my jarana and just spend hours playing, and hours pass. And I think that our bodies and our minds, especially at this time, in this political climate, need that kind of spiritual infusion of what that traditional music can bring. And thinking about the *quijada* and how when it's played it releases a spirit, and that that instrument came from such horrible violence that brought us all together. The transatlantic slave trade, colonization, all of these horrors and terrors, can produce something so beautiful, is really inspiring to me. And to be able to continue that is a spiritual project. It connects you back to your ancestors, even if you're not from Veracruz. It's creation, it's something that is part of us deep, deep, deep in our *huesos*.

Aimee, through *son jarocho*, feels a deep connection to her ancestors by discovering the beauty of ancestral knowledge that has survived colonization (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). *Son jarocho* provides Aimee with a spiritual place to connect through creation (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012), something that she feels deep, deep in her *huesos*, bones.

The traditional *fandango* and the *convivencia* that is created through the gathering around a *tarima* and creating community with music and dance, was present in every *testimonio.* The *fandango* has become a place of growth, exploration, and transformation. *Tallerista* Doña Lupe shares:

> *El son jarocho crea comunidad de ésta forma, el fandango. Y en el fandango tu invitas a cualquier subirse a la tarima a bailar como sea y como salga. Entonces eso crea comunidad. En la forma en cómo crear comunidad es a través del fandango que es propio y clásico del son jarocho. Y los fandangos crea comunidad porque todo el mundo wow, se incluye, y se avienta en la tarima y baila, aunque no sepas bailar te avientas a la tarima.* So*, es una forma de envolver a la gente y crear comunidad.*[55]

Doña Lupe stresses the importance of the *fandango* when creating community. *Fandangos* become a *nepantla* (Anzaldúa, 2002) where the community can grow and develop together.

Johanna learned that the *fandangos* are the heart of *son jarocho:*

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[54] Welcome to the perdition that is son (translation provided by author)

[55] *Son jarocho* creates community in this way, the *fandango*. And at the *fandango*, you invite anyone to get on the *tarima,* and dance, however it comes out. So, that creates community. The way to create community is through the *fandango* that is unique and classic of *son jarocho*. And *fandangos* create community because the whole world, wow, is included and they just go for it on the *tarima* and dance, even if you don't know how to dance, you just go for it on the *tarima*. So, that is a way to involve the people and create community. (translation provided by author)

> I love when we do *fandangos*. The *fandangos* are so important. I read a *verso* somewhere, that at the heart of *son jarocho* are the *fandangos*. And the heart of the *fandangos* are the *tarimas*. *Son jarocho* is a music that was created and meant to be done within community. Other types of music were meant to be performed, and they still are meant to be just performed. But *son* is inviting everybody to come learn with us. So many people in Veracruz play *jaranas*, and over here, sometimes I feel like over here in the U.S. it's shown like 'look so much talent' or 'these performers' and it's like, no we are humbly learning to become a part of a bigger picture, not so that we can perform for these people. We are humbly learning it so that we can have everybody come together, like they do in Veracruz. We need the *fandangos*, if not, then this music that was not meant to be just done by yourself at home is going to die. The *fandangos* keep it alive.

Johanna speaks to the importance of connecting (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012) with others, as well as the importance of protecting (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012) the traditions and cultures though the *fandangos* because *fandangos* are what keep *son jarocho* alive.

As *lxs talleristas* share their *testimonios* their personal experiences with *son jarocho*, as a community of Chicanxs, it becomes evident that becoming involved in *son jarocho* has been a life-changing experience. *Son jarocho* has become a vehicle for discovering ancestral knowledge, for decolonizing identity, for finding rituals and traditions. Through *son jarocho*, we have built a community, we found a *familia*. *Son jarocho* becomes a decolonial indigenous research agenda (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012) in that through indigenous African roots music and *cultura*, Chicanxs claim, celebrate survival, indigenize, connect, revitalize and regenerate, network, protect, create, discover the beauty of our knowledge, and then share that knowledge through music and dance.

**El Tallercito de Son: *Creando Comunidad a Través de la Cultura***

El Tallercito has a mission to *crear comunidad a través de la cultura*—create community through culture. When Cuauhtli and I agreed that we would teach the free *talleres* together, our main goal was to create an open, inclusive, and welcoming space where Chicanxs—and other Latinxs—could reclaim *cultura*, investigate their roots, and have a *comunidad* to call their own.

*Lxs talleristas* shared their *testimonios* about the ways in which Tallercito has been a vehicle to create community and the impact Tallercito has had in their lives.

Johanna felt welcomed into Tallercito from the first time she took her daughter to a *fandango*:

> It was the welcoming feeling that made me want to learn more. Because we were welcomed into the space from the band on stage, that was an invitation to look more into it. And that was the first time I'd ever heard of El Tallercito. I brought my daughter to an event at the Southwest Workers Union. It was the *Día de los Muertos fandango* and community altar, and it was like oh you're part of us now, come take the picture with us. It was like OK, you're here, you're part of us now. It was real inviting like that.

From her first interaction with El Tallercito, Johanna felt welcomed, and in community, a part of us now.

For *tallerista* Isaac, El Tallercito has become a transformative place:

> It's like you come to the space and it's transformative in a way that you're not doing transactions anymore. It's not transactional, like oh I'm going to this, and you come to this. You know, you go to show support, someone needs a ride, someone needs a bed to sleep on, a ride home, a dog sitter, you name it we've all done that for one another.

The transformative relationships that Isaac has formed through El Tallercito make El Tallercito a project of the indigenous research agenda (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012) in that it provides a space for transformation, decolonization, and healing through *comunidad*, through *son jarocho.*

Feeling connected to something larger then one's self was weaved into each of the *tallerista's testimonios.* Johanna shared:

> People come to Tallercito looking for a connection to something. I mean here in the U.S., you can go lots of places and learn just the music side—well, sort of I mean—from anybody, but not the whole thing. Not here, because Tallercito respects the traditions, and stays true to them. And when the *maestros* come, you learn to execute the music. The rhythms are executed like this, and the *zapateado* like that, and there are different ways to play the *jarana*, and different ways to dance. And these are the *sones* you play at the beginning of a *fandango*, and these are the *sones* you play towards the end. I don't know if you would learn that anywhere else, from people around here, or if they would just kind of learn how to play the music side, and think that they are all set because they know the music, but there is more to it. It is a bigger picture; it all works together.

Learning the traditions and *cultura* that make *son jarocho* the community music it is, is an important part of the *taller* for Johanna. Not only does Tallercito provide a place for people to feel connected to their roots and to other Chicanxs, but it protects *son jarocho's* traditions, being mindful to always share the knowledge that elders have shared with us (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012).

Breaking bread together, sharing meals, and cooking for each other has been a way for *lxs talleristas* to create community outside of the weekly *taller.* Cuauhtli remembers eating together as one of the first things we all did together outside of Tuesday's *taller*:

> I think that was one of the first things that we started doing outside of *taller* was we would go to eat after *taller*. And then we started getting together for Christmas, getting together for New Year's, getting together for other holidays. There's not a single person in *taller* that shows up to these events, that doesn't involve themselves in planning them. Because they certainly hold a great amount of anticipation and expectation when they're coming up, you know? They start to get excited, whether it's for a *fandango* or for just a Thanksgiving potluck. And even just through those events, sometimes we get to meet family that we don't get to meet during the *fandangos.* Or you get to sit and talk with people, you learn so much about somebody's thoughts or their home-life. And then, those things start to unravel themselves. People start to bring their grandparents, people start to bring their kids, people start to bring their cousins, all kinds of other things. So, it starts to become more of a family space of family interaction.

Isaac also expressed the power food has to unite people:

> Honestly, I never celebrated Día de los Muertos until I was at a *fandango* for Tallercito. It's interesting, it's fun, it brings everyone together. The entire community comes together, the neighbors from the *centro* are there, my friends are there, their friends are there. There's like chickens, little kids running around, it's pretty freaking awesome. There is a barrio procession. We fed the community. I think food is life, food is nourishment. And we combine that with music, and music is also life and nourishment You can't live without food. But that brings a lot of people together, and it is just really important to have a community event that is just free to the public.

Food has become an integral part of El Tallercito. We celebrate birthdays with potlucks and cake. We make sure to always have a place for families, and people who feel displaced from their families, to gather on Holidays. Cuauhtli shared how important those gatherings have become:

> We have stuff like 'Friendsgiving'—and yeah it's a very white thing, but it's also an obvious way to give people a home that are displaced from their families. Because we don't just have people that are far away from their families, we have people who feel like they don't have families anymore. I know for sure, that there are people in our group that feel maybe even just the central identity of their family is gone, due to loss of a person or due to the misunderstanding between them and family members or whatever. So, not even just people that are far away from their families, but people that are maybe, like mentally or spiritually far away from their families. I think a less used term is fellowship, and we provide that; we involve ourselves with Tallercito for simple things, like just getting together and eating.

For both Isaac and Cuauhtli, El Tallercito is a place where there is nourishment for your body and your soul, through food, music, and *comunidad.*

The *comunidad* of El Tallercito has provided *tallerista* Angela happiness and comfort during a very difficult time in her life:

> So, about Tallercito, my mom was like 'you're so much happier because you're not at work, and you're playing a musical instrument' and I said to her, 'mom, but I'm not very good' and she said 'oh that doesn't matter.' And when I bought my *jarana*, and I put my money down around the fall, my dad is really cheap and was like 'why are you spending your money on that' and my mom was like 'no you cannot do that.' And then she passed away in January. And for me, if I didn't keep going, I would have just stayed on the sofa. I went to work, I came to Tallercito. And that is how I got though it really. Because otherwise…I just couldn't…I mean my mom was my best friend. And I didn't have anybody to talk to anymore, and my dad was angry, and my family was far away. Sorry, I never cry in public. But my dad had sort of accepted it, and he said to me 'you have to go, you have to your mom said it made you happy. So, you have to go.' So, I tell him, those *jaranas* that are coming in August, uh, I bought one.' He laughed and said 'oh, OK.' It was like he could still hear my mom ringing in the background. So, for me, it got me through the worst time. Because I wasn't doing anything, and everything went to pieces. But I came to *taller*, and it kept things going, and it pulled me through the darkness in a way that is really hard to understand. But I know that by about May I was like oh, It's not better, but it's different, but you're just kind of moving on.

The tears rolled down Angela's face as she shared her *testimonio* about her mother supporting her journey in *son jarocho*. The *plática* that Angela shared this story in, was one of the most beautiful, powerful, supporting moments I have witnessed since Tallercito's inception two and a half years ago. Several *talleristas* cried with Angela, and the *mujeres* that have become *hermanas*, stood from their chairs and closed the circle in around Angela, supporting her through

her pain. By sharing her *testimonio* in a safe space, among her *comunidad*, El Tallercito became a space for Angela to heal (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Flores Carmona, 2012; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012).

For José Luis, El Tallercito has been a place to find some much-needed respite from today's harsh realities:

> *Se me olvida todo. Cuando estoy aquí, esas dos ó tres horas, ya sea en un fandango o en el taller, se me olvida todo lo que está atrás, lo que está pasando afuera, en la sociedad o en mi casa, problemas, se me olvida. Y esas dos horas se me hacen hasta a veces cortitas. Quisiera que fuera todos los días.*[56]

José Luis finds the same comfort in *son jarocho* that *bailadora* Martha Vega feels when she is on the *tarima,* she forgets all her problems, because on the *tarima,* she is a different *Martha* (Fandango: Searching for the White Monkey, 2006).

El Tallercito has provided the space that *lxs talleristas* need to fill a void in their individual lives. In their *testimonios*, each *tallerista* creates community through *cultura* in a unique and important way. Isaac shared:

> We have this motto *creando comunidad a través de la cultura*, and by all coming together, that is basically what we are doing. We are using this afro-indigenous music to make its mark, and be present in all and as many social justice spaces that we have the privilege of being a part of. I don't have another space that is so intergenerational with so my different people from different walks of life. I think it is important, for me, at least in my life, it's important and unique in my life because, my chosen family here is, for the most part, all the same age and we are all mostly queer because sometimes you just need that, for mental health and safety. But even that becomes a part of Tallercito, like my queer friends come through, and I have my trans friends coming through.

El Tallercito has a created a space for Isaac to bring all his communities together, making it a unique and important space in his life, his *Mundo Zurdo* where he can be all the pieces of himself, his whole self (Anzaldúa, 1983).

[56] I forget everything. When I am here, those two or three hours, whether it be at a *fandango*, or at *taller*, I forget everything that is behind me, what is happening in the outside world, in society, or in my home, problems, I forget them. And those two hours even seem short some times. I wish it was every day. (translation provided by author)

El Tallercito has become the vehicle through which *talleristas* contribute to their *comunidad*, a way to give back to the community, something that they feel is important. For Johanna, keeping the traditions of *son jarocho* alive is her way of contributing:

> As a Chicana in Tallercito I feel like I am contributing to something. Because what would the *son* community in San Anto be if it weren't for El Tallercito. The reason that *son* is still alive and well in San Antonio is because Tallercito is here to keep it alive and as close to the traditional form that it can be, considering that we are outside of Veracruz.

*Lxs talleristas* are revitalizing *son jarocho* here in San Antonio, protecting its traditions, and sharing the beauty of ancestral knowledge and indigenous, Afro-Mexican music with the *comunidad* (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). For Isaac:

> *Creando comunidad a través de la cultura* to me means that you are in very intersectional ways giving back to the community through this one instrument, through this one sound. And I think that is very powerful because I think this music, when people hear it I think it's very pleasant to hear, and it gets people's attention. So, when you go somewhere to support something, it's basically, literally through acts of solidarity and as accomplices with other movements, we are also educating people about this style of music that has been around for so long.

Isaac notes the importance of using *son jarocho* as a tool to educate the community, sharing and revitalizing the traditions of indigenous and Afro-Mexican populations (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). He went on to share:

> Our mode of education, if we had to apply one, would be popular education. I feel like the more rigid forms of education don't allow you to have a five-year old with a 34 year old married man, but it works in Tallercito. I mean we are doing free popular education to the community. I think that is the one thing that I want the most, or that is guiding me, it is free. I would have never paid. Honestly, like where am I going to get the money, I'm barely making it, like we are all struggling. We are all struggling to live, and pay for our light, pay for our rent, pay for our food, and everything, that you really have to have more money to be able to do extra things. Oh, yeah, you know I'm paying $100 a month for yoga. Like I would never do that, because that is not something I can do. That would be what you would charge for *son jarocho*, honestly, or like music classes, but who is going be able to pay that? And then you think about what was everyone's problem? It was that we didn't have access. If we have access to everything, then that is amazing, but when you cut off to people with a certain income, and who knows what that income is, but you're still cutting off access. And it has to be free because I have this guiding principal in everything that I want to do, and that is that if it is not accessible to the poor, then it's

> not revolutionary. I grew up poor, there is a struggle there, and we need to remedy that. And that is my guiding principal and that is the thing about Tallercito, it's free. We raise money to buy instruments for students, that way they can just come and play, no instrument required. Right? That's our pitch, no instrument required! Just show the fuck up. We should start a how do we get you to Tallercito, probably in the future get a Tallercito van, that way we can pick folks up.

The importance of a free community class is evident in Isaac's *testimonio*, he himself would not be able to afford the cost of a monthly music class. Our free weekly *taller* provides a much needed service to the *comunidad*. El Tallercito has become an intergenerational learning space through the sharing, revitalization, and practice of indigenous Afro-Mexican music, where decolonial theories come alive through *son jarocho*.

**Social Justice: *Son Jarocho* as Cultural Resistance**

The arts have always been present in the Chicanx movement. Father of Chicanx Theatre, Luis Valdez (1971) wrote that Chicanx art must be revolutionary and it must educate the *pueblo* towards an appreciation of social change. El Tallercito has become a vehicle for social justice, a vehicle for change.

*Tallerista* Johanna attended her first *marcha*[57] as part of a social justice movement through El Tallercito:

> Since learning *son*, and being in Tallercito, I participate more in social justice movements. For a long time, I didn't watch the news, and I didn't really care what was going on. But then, being in Tallercito and hearing like 'oh we are going to go to the International Women's Day March'… Actually, the first march that I have ever been to, was the Women's march with Tallercito. Like before, I knew things were messed up, and I went through a stage where I was like I don't even want to hear about it, I'm just not going to. Then I went to the Women's march, and from there I wanted to know more about why everything happens, and how the marches happen and help. I want to go to all the *marchas* I can now.

Johanna has found a way to participate in social change through *son jarocho* and El Tallercito. By marching with El Tallercito, Johanna has found a way to resist:

[57] March (translation provided by the author)

> As a Chicana playing *son* at the marchas, I feel like I'm a bigger part of it, because we are making noise. And everybody brings their noise makers, and for us that is our noise, but its more than just noise. It's not just like the beating of a whatever or yelling, it's singing, it's using our *cultura* as resistance. Culture is resistance. Chicanas are one of the least liked minority groups in the U.S. because we don't assimilate. We won't assimilate.

Johanna uses her voice, her *jarana*, as her resistance; because for her, *cultura* is resistance. She has even made the connection between *son* and punk rock:

> It's resistance music. It's like the original Mexican punk rock—yes, it's punk rock. It's like indigenous from back in the day, this is the original punk rock. The very nature of the music itself is resistance. That is why when we go to the marches, it means so much to me that we play *son jarocho*, because of the connection it has to resistance. They weren't allowed to play the music, the African slaves weren't allowed to have instruments. So, the *cajón* is a wooden box that was on the slave ships, and they used it as an instrument. And that is how they would create these things, and it was resistance. And to me, that is punk rock.

Johanna makes an important connection between *son jarocho's* beginnings as a resistance music, and Chicanxs using *son jarocho* today as a revitalized form of resistance in our *comunidad* at *marchas* (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012).

Being present at the *marchas* is something that is important to *lxs talleristas*, every *testimonio* shared included *marchas* and social justice as a vital part of El Tallercito's mission. *Tallerista* Aimee expressed how important our participation is:

> We've been very visible at different marches. There are different causes that we have played for, and it has been very diverse. I think we are recognized as being a group that is always supportive of causes for social justice. Because we play, and we play for free or a small donation, and it always goes back to our *taller*, and that ethic is important. Because we're not here to make money off of *son*, we're not here to make a *disco*[58], or become famous. We're just here to provide the soundtrack for different causes.

Isaac provides more insight into how El Tallercito has supported:

> We can basically go anywhere with this music and help out through music. But also, we are not just going to play when we go play music somewhere, it's all connected. And it's an act of solidarity. We've done rallies, we've done pride, and even though I have my issues with some events with pride, I think we are extending solidarity across the board in the community.

[58] disc, as in musical CD (translation provided by author)

*Son jarocho* becomes a powerful tool that *talleristas* can use as their voice at *marchas* and rallies. For Cuauhtli our *jaranas, requintos* and other traditional instruments become so much more than just a musical instrument:

> They're not just instruments, they're tools of mass disruption. A lot of times in the Chicano culture, I think especially in California, after the introduction of *son* into California, it was used in all kinds of *marchas* and that made it very much like a tool. We like to say *armas,* but it's not really that it's a weapon. You know, there's things that don't directly translate… They are your *armas*, you don't go into battle without them. The end.

For Cuauhtli—*y lxs talleristas*— instruments become "tools of mass disruption" as he affectionately refers to his *requinto*; holding true to what Norma Alarcón (1990) wrote that the Chicano identity is consciously and critically assumed, serving as a point of redeparture for dismantling, in this case, *cultura. Lxs talleristas* take their instruments, or as they call them *armas*—literally translated means weapons, but for the *talleristas*, it's a non-violent tool—to *marchas* where *talleristas* fight injustices, and for Cuauhtli "you don't go into battle without them. The end."

*Tallerista* José Luis shares Cuauhtli's sentiments about *marchas* being a battle ground, and that *son jarocho* is its rhythm:

> *Estaba viendo muchos videos en mis redes sociales, y en cada marcha o en cada lucha social, siempre hay ese requinto, o esa jarana tocando, el ritmo a la lucha. Sentí como, cuando vas a la guerra y están tocando los tambores y así sentía yo el rasgueo de la jarana. Como que, nos está llevando hacia una batalla.*[59]

For José Luis, *son* has become the heart and soul of the *marchas*:

> *Una vez lo comenté, y lo sigo comentando, que el son aquí en San Antonio, el son jarocho, El Tallercito viene siendo el alma, el corazón de la marcha. Porque es alegría, y*

[59] I was seeing a lot of videos on my social media accounts, and in every march or in every social justice fight, there is always that *requinto*, or that *jarana* playing, the rhythm of the fight. I felt, like when you go to war, and they are playing the drums, and that is how I felt the strumming of the *jarana*. Like, it is taking us to a battle. (translation provided by author)

> *a la misma vez vamos luchando por la causa que estemos en esa circunstancia, en ese momento. Yo siempre he dicho que el son, es el alma de la marcha.*[60]

The beautiful resistance music that is created through *son jarocho* has transformed the way that José Luis participates in *marchas.* Over the past two years, I have observed him at several *marchas,* with his daughters carrying signs, *jarana* in his hands—the International Women's Day march, the César Chávez march, just to name a few. It is a powerful image of a Chicano father, leading his daughters, his *comunidad*, into the battle field. It is a truly moving experience, and I feel honored to stand with my fellow *talleristas* at the *marchas,* providing the soundtrack, the battle call for Chicanxs everywhere to come and march, to come and fight.

The *testimonios* that *lxs talleristas* have shared show how Chicanxs in 2017 in San Antonio, Texas, have revitalized *son jarocho* as a tool for social justice (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). *Son jarocho* has given them a voice at the *marcha*, a way to resist through *cultura.* The *requintos* and *jaranas* that *lxs talleristas* play have become tools of mass disruption, a way to fight against oppression and racism as Chicanxs. El Tallercito, and the *son jarocho* that is played at marchas, has become not only the soundtrack, but the *alma y el corazón* of the *marcha*.

**Transnationalism: A Community with No Borders**

As a Chicana, with no direct ancestral ties to Veracruz, *México*, it is very important to me to provide learning opportunities at El Tallercito for *talleristas* to learn directly from people whose families have been keeping *son jarocho* and its traditions alive for over 300 years. As a founding member and co-facilitator, being able to give back to communities in Veracruz is very important to Cuauhtli:

> In a lot of places I stayed in Veracruz and *México*, I kind of felt a lot like a burden. I mean, I would stay with collectives and I worked for them, and I paid rent, and stuff like

[60] I once commented this, and I keep saying, that *son* here in San Antonio, *son jarocho*, El Tallercito has been the soul, the heart of the march. Because it is joy, and at the same time we are fighting for the cause that we are at in that circumstance, in that moment. I have always said that *son*, is the soul of the march. (translation provided by author)

> that, but I still felt like a burden. You're still in somebody's space, in somebody's home, there so that you can learn something. I felt that I was taking, and taking, and even though I was paying for certain things like *hosepedaje*[61], or *comida*[62], there wasn't a lot that I could do. And up until we started doing this work with Tallercito, there was nothing that I could offer anybody. Since we started interactions as Tallercito, there has been more of a reciprocal action. There are lots of different things that we are able to do because of Tallercito. *Maestros/as* come, and they stay with us, and they eat with us, and we cook for them. *Convivencia.* It's like every time you were in Veracruz, you hear that word constantly. I've been to so many people's different *ranchos* where they host you, and they feed you, and they teach you things, and here, I feel like we do the same thing. We've hosted people, we've taken them out to experience our favorite things here. Take them out to our local regional music hangout, and stuff like that. And its felt nice to revisit those people that I know, and not feel that sense of debt towards them. And there's still people I feel indebted to there, and I hope throughout our project we continue being able to share our resources, and share our ability to exchange.

Through our transnational project of bringing a *maestro* or *maestra* as a teaching artist from *México* at least once a year to offer free *talleres*, has provided Cuauhtli with a sense of relief from the guilt he felt as a Chicano learning *son.* El Tallercito has created a transnational exchange that is not only monetary, but *cultural* as well. The visiting maestros are part of an *intercambio cultural*—a cultural exchange—through a reciprocal process of sharing, learning, and *convivencia.*

Like Cuauhtli, Isaac appreciates the reciprocal nature of the exchanges between *lxs talleristas* and the visiting *maestros*:

> It's definitely reciprocal, and we are bringing them, and then they are going back, and with the funds we are able to give them, they also do projects like this. Because they're using music this way, and we are using music this other way in two different places and when we can, we link up.

The visiting *maestros/as* has become something that all of *lxs talleristas* look forward to. It is one of Johanna's favorite times of year:

> I have been at Tallercito for five out of the six visiting *maestros*. Every year, now that I know a *maestro* or *maestra* is coming, I look forward to it. It is one of the highlights of my year, that week is going to be the best week of the year. We are going to be learning

[61] Lodging (translation provided by author)
[62] Food (translation provided by author)

> non-stop every day from somebody who is a part of where the music originated. Like they are the originators of the music, being from Veracruz. And we don't just learn music, we learn a lot about their culture. About how they learned *son.* We learn a lot about the unwritten rules of *fandangos*. How to be respectful, and respect the tradition.

*Talleristas* can discover the beauty of ancestral knowledge form the culture bearers themselves, learning from people who come from the place the music originated (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012).

Isaac shares Johanna's excitement about learning directly from those who live the cultura of *son* everyday:

> Visiting *maestros* is pretty awesome. We have done three since I have been around, but I know y'all have done more. I think it's great that we have this connection to the origin and people that have been playing *son jarocho* forever, and have just been passing it down and passing it down. And we get the privilege of learning from that lineage. When Claudio[63] came the first time, I went every single day, and I did every *taller*, even the *zapateado*, and we had the *fandango* at your house, and I learned to play a *son* that I didn't know, and I learned it there on the spot just from watching Claudio, and you. So, it was like oh my god, I get it, it's working!

*Lxs talleristas* celebrate the survival (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012) of *son jarocho* by forming transnational bonds with people from Veracruz who are living traditions, embodying the legacies of their indigenous Afro-Mexican ancestors.

*Talleristas* are making unique connections and there are transfers of knowledge that happen in organic ways (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Julián shared:

> I am the son of Mexican immigrants—if you want to call them immigrants, I mean we are still in *México*. Throughout my whole life I've felt that binational-transnational community because of family relationships and stuff like that. But Tallercito has enabled me to kind of deepen and broaden those connections beyond just my family and assorted friends in *México*. For me, it helps me to deepen my knowledge of *México*, and create friendships and relationship through the music. So, being able to go to a place like Los Tuxtlas in Veracruz, and already having contacts there, and being part of like the whole family that nucleates around this thing, is something that is very unique, and something that I've never really seen before in my life. Tallercito really facilitates those types of connections and transfers of knowledge and things like that. I wouldn't be able to learn as much as I have if it weren't for those connections. Because there is a little bit of a barrier that has to be broken down, because I do live in the U.S., I'm not a full-time resident in

[63] Claudio Vega, from Los Vega, a family that has spent over four generations keeping *son jarocho* alive in their small town of Boca San Miguel, Veracruz.

> Veracruz, in these communities. And so, being able to kind of break through that barrier through these connections, is also something that is very important and unique.

El Tallercito has provided Julián with a unique opportunity to break through a barrier he felt as someone from the U.S. who is not a permanent resident of Veracruz.

Fundraising is an important part of our transnational exchange. Through paid performances and community fundraisers, we have the monetary means to bring *maestros/as* from *México*. Isaac explained:

> We take money so that we can provide free classes and bring *maestros*. We also pay for the *maestros* to come. We pay for everything, plane tickets, food, everything. We are definitely building a community across the border. It's like they become immersed in our daily lives, with whoever is hosting them that day.

The exchanges that happen throughout the visit extends far beyond just the few hours that *talleristas* are in the *talleres.* José Luis touched on the different ways in which *talleristas* provide support during the visits:

> *El colectivo, El Tallercito, es un grupo que tiene diferentes pilares. Unos se dediquen a unas cosas, otros a otra. Unos del grupo se hace cargo del maestro tal día, o lo lleve a tal parte. Hacemos comidas, pos yo los invito a mi casa a comer.*[64]

Sharing a meal in the Tallercito tradition is an opportunity for *maestros/as* to share the stories of their ancestors, of the *pueblitos* where they are from, and the cultural legacies that have survived colonization and (re)colonization through *son jarocho.*

The transnational relationships that have resulted in the visiting *maestros/as* exchange are important to *lxs talleristas.* Many have formed genuine friendships and keep in touch. Johanna spoke to her newfound friendship with our first visiting female *maestra*, Raque Palacios Vega:

[64] The collective, El Tallercito, is a group that has different pillars. Some dedicate themselves to some things, others to different things. Some people in the group are in charge of the *maestro* this day, or they take him to where he needs to be. We make food, well I invited them to my home to eat. (translation provided by author)

> Having the opportunity to meet these *maestros*, and maintain our friendships and relationships across the borders is important to me. Raquel[65] and I *nos hicimos muy amigas*[66], like beyond the music. I talk to her about things that are going on, friends *de verdad, a través de la distancia*.[67]

Social media provides an outlet for friendships to be maintained, and *talleristas* not only keep in touch with the *maestros* and *maestras,* but they are active participants in their life. Isaac has stayed in contact with several maestros:

> When it comes to social media, yeah, I have lots of new friends in *México*. Like Claudio likes my pictures, or I'll leave comments on Godo[68] or Andres's[69] page, because I have a *jarana* from Godo.

Isaac has even expressed a newfound want to travel to Veracruz, "I want to go. I feel like I have connections now, before I had zero connections to *México*."

Recently married *talleristas* Johanna and Ricardo Briones spent their honeymoon in Veracruz, *México*, a place neither had ever visited. Through El Tallercito, they made connections all over the Veracruz, traveling to several different communities. Ricardo experienced first-hand the power that *son jarocho* has to create community:

> I think what is interesting having gone to Veracruz, is just worldwide how it creates community. Because my wife Johanna was able to go to a *fandango*, and automatically meet a whole bunch of people and talk to them, and it's like instant community. And you are just able to fit in, and you can talk about all sorts of stuff from there.

Through *son jarocho*, Johanna created, shared, and networked with several people in different communities throughout Veracruz (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). For Johanna, being able to play at a *fandango* in Veracruz after falling in love with *son* two years ago was impactful:

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[65] Raquel Palacios Vega, is Claudio's cousin, and a member of Los Vega
[66] We became good friends (translation provided by author)
[67] Real friends, through the distance (translation provided by author)
[68] Alfredo "Godo" Herrera, from El Puerto de Veracruz, is a *laudero*, someone who makes *jaranas, requintos*, and other traditional instruments. Godo was the first *maestro* we brought, and many *talleristas* own *jaranas* made by him.
[69] Andres Flores, from Coatzacoalcos, Veracruz, has played with important *son jarocho* groups like El Chuchumbé, working hard to revitalize *son jarocho* since the 1980's. Several *talleristas* own *panderos* (a percussion tambourine-like instrument) that Andres crafted while visiting San Antonio.

> Me being able to play in the *fandango* in Veracruz, and know what was going on was amazing. Because, you know, usually when musicians get together, they have to practice, and when someone joins a band, you just don't all the sudden play well with them. And this music is…you don't have to have ever even said hi to these people. I mean, there were so many people there I have never even said hi to, and then all of the sudden, I am making music with them. It's crazy, you know?

Johanna did, however, notice a major difference in Tallercito *fandangos*, and the *fandangos* in Veracruz:

> When I was in Xalapa, we went to a small *fandanguito*, one thing I did notice is that I was the first woman to sing. I even had to ask after I did it because I was feeling really insecure about it. And over here I feel like we have a lot of *mujeres* in *taller*. Me, you, Aimee, Angela, Jen, Cindy, Lupe, little Mia, I feel like we are starting to outnumber the men! So, that is different. But, there were women playing, and dancing. Dancing *zapateado* mostly, but not really singing.

More research is needed on how Chicanx communities in the U.S. empower women to sing and play *jarana*. Research is also needed on the gender roles that exist within *son jarocho* in Veracruz, and if Chicanas playing *jarana* has impacted *mujeres* in Veracruz at all.

El Tallercito's *intercambios culturales* with visiting *maestros/as* from *México* have resulted in *talleristas* being embedded in a community that spans across borders (Vásquez, 2009). *Talleristas* like Julián have been aware of their binational community for some time, but Tallercito has stimulated the growth of the desire to be connected to others on both sides of the border through a common ancestral root, *son jarocho* (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012; Vertovec, 1999). The in-depth *testimonios* that *lxs talleristas* shared about their transnational relationships and exchanges from their Chicanx perspective, documents their voices and stories as transnational actors, something that Goldin (1999) called for more of in her research.

**Academic Representation: El Tallercito Breaking into Academic Spaces.**

As a Chicana, growing up in the barrio, I have always recognized the lack of representation and unequal access to academic programs, starting as young as elementary school.

I watched other kids in my class get picked up by fancy dance school vans and tutoring programs that you had to pay for after school. When I began my academic journey as a graduate student, narrowing down my thesis project, the lack of representation and unequal access continued—for example, the number of Chicanx studies courses offered was so limited, that I had a hard time completing my degree plan. The lack of representation and unequal academic access that Chicanxs face, limits their opportunities growing up, putting them at a disadvantage before they even reach high school.

Several *talleristas* shared their struggles with limited access throughout their educational career in their *testimonios.* Before El Tallercito, Johanna never had access to learning a musical instrument:

> I have never played an instrument before. I never took band because you had to pay for those instruments in band, and the uniforms and all that. So, that is why I never took it, because my mom wouldn't put me in band, or dance, or anything that cost extra money, I would never be in it. But I always loved music, even from a young age, I just was never nurtured in that aspect.

Growing up, Johanna's mother didn't have the economic means to pay for any sort of extracurricular activities, like music. Even though growing up Johanna didn't have access to extracurricular activities at school, as an adult, El Tallercito and *son jarocho* has provided her with academic guidance:

> El Tallercito has helped me academically. For example, Aimee has helped me a lot, and we meet outside of Tallercito, and we have dinner, and she is somebody that I talk to. And I am back in school. Before I didn't really have direction and I was really discouraged by school, aside from English class, I never did really well in anything at school. And now, I am going to college, and I am studying English, history, sociology. I am learning that there are more things that I can get into. And, you Keli, I'll reach out to you about different things, for school, or advice on life, like how to navigate through life. Julián has tutored me, and has helped me through a paper I had to do on gerrymandering, and I'll probably hit him up whenever I have to take math classes, cause I'm saving that for the end!

Johanna has not only returned to school, but is excited when she speaks about her experiences as a student. She has found much needed academic support in her Tallercito community, seeking out advice, receiving guidance, and even tutoring.

Seeing yourself in class curriculum is of the utmost importance, and too often, Chicanx voices are left out of the narrative. Isaac spoke to this lack of representation:

> I never felt represented in my academic experience, ever. There was nothing Chicano about the courses and the materials we were learning about. It was all about white people. There needs to be more brown people in academic spaces. It's like a big affront, you have all these white people telling our story. It is important that brown voices tell brown stories. It should be by us, for us. It's kind of like something you have to unlearn. We are OK with other people telling our stories, because nobody has told you otherwise, so we're OK with it, and we're passive. And it's not until someone tells you, like no, this isn't how it's supposed to be; then that sort of remolds you. I mean yeah, sure there is going to be some white people telling our stories somewhere, but are they at least accomplices in our movement, or are they? I think about this a lot. Wow, like you grew up to have a job and earn a living basically off of people of color's oppression. It is a replication of white supremacy on the academic level when white people tell our stories.

Isaac felt as though he was invisible in his academic classes, there was nothing Chicanx about them. The lasting effects of colonization and (re)colonization are present in his academic experience, something that many Chicanxs battle with daily (Vigil & Hanley, 2002). It is important for him that brown voices tell brown stories, and he questions the intentions of those white people who are telling our stories. These are powerful realities that Isaac has shared through his *testimonio,* and there needs to be more documentation of these kinds of detailed experiences, of Chicanxs experiences in the academy—by us, for us.

For Johanna and José Luis, El Tallercito provided access into academic spaces that they traditionally would not have access to. Johanna shared her *testimonio* for the first time at an academic conference at the University of Texas at San Antonio's downtown campus:

> When I gave my *testimonio* in those academic spaces, it was nerve wracking because I never give speeches, or speak in public or anything like that. It made me feel good to share my story, like hey maybe there are other people out there who are shy and going

> through these struggles where they want to be involved somehow, and maybe don't know how, and I think Tallercito is a good tool and *son jarocho* is a good tool for that.

José Luis was also nervous sharing his *testimonio* in an academic space:

> *Estaba nervioso dar mi testimonio allá en la universidad, nunca lo había hecho. En sí, era como que yo no lo creía, en mi punta de vista, como que yo no mas acabe la prepa y, yo se que estaba yendo a un centro académico se puede decir que aquí en San Antonio de los más grandes que hay. Y sí estaba muy muy nervioso. Pero ya después cuando acabé me sentí agusto. Y ya después cuando escuche la profesora Saldaña mencionó una de las cosas que yo dije, es cuando dije entonces si dije algo bien. Alguien captó el mensaje.*[70]

Both Johanna and José Luis felt a sense of empowerment and satisfaction in giving their *testimonios*, and the experience was transformative (Anzaldúa, 2002; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012).

Many of *lxs talleristas* felt a lack of representation and unequal access to academic opportunities throughout their lives, beginning as early as elementary school, and lasting well into their experiences at institutions of higher learning. As a graduate student, I have used my privilege to take *lxs talleristas* into these academic institutions, and create a space for them to be represented, to share their *testimonios*, and to transform not only themselves, but the people who attend the workshops (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). *Lxs talleristas* have broken into academic spaces, bringing decolonial methodologies to life through the practice and sharing of *son jarocho*.

**Youth and Future Generations: Growing up with El Tallercito**

Youth are vital to the survival of *son jarocho*, to any *cultura*, to any tradition, to any *comunidad.* Young people are the future, the ones that will embody the living legacies of their ancestors. Too often our young people lack positive role models, adults that they can look up to,

[70] I was nervous to give my *testimonio* over at the university, I had never done it. It was like, I didn't believe it, from my point of view, since I only finished high school, and I knew I was going to an academic place, that you could say here in San Antonio is one of the biggest. And I was very nervous. But afterwards, when I finished, I felt satisfied. And when I heard Professor Saldaña mention one of the things I had said, that's when I said then I must have said something right. Someone captured the message. (translation provided by author)

mentors to guide them on their path to *conocimiento* (Anzaldúa, 2002). *Tallerista* Isaac didn't have that growing up, and for him, it is vital to be there for our youth:

> There are kids that come to Tallercito. I saw one at the natatorium, and he waved at me. And they don't just come to *taller,* they come to all the other things, and Tallercito goes to all of the other things too. Like San Anto Cultural Arts is doing a summer youth program, and me a *tallerista*, through this food project that I have where I want to talk and help people through food, by eating inexpensively vegan. And the kids loved it. It is important to model those behaviors to our young people. I mean we always think back, and I wish I'd had someone to talk to, to look up to, to be there for me. I wish I had someone more queer accepting of me when I was a kid. I wish I had someone who was '*etcetera*,' you know? You can insert your 'I wish' there, and I'm not saying that we are completing young people's wishes, but our space is so diverse that, that we are able to come together, in my view, respectably, and all be different and just be together.

Isaac has begun modeling positive behaviors with the youth who attend Tallercito, he teaches them not only about what being a vegan is, but about healthy eating choices and how to eat healthy on a low budget. Our youth need that guidance and that investment by caring and nurturing adults. I have seen the interactions between Isaac's food collective, Vegans del Barrio and the Tallercito youth, and have witnessed youth becoming involved and excited about healthy eating.

José Luis and Johanna are both parents, and their girls attend Tallercito *talleres, fandangos*, and celebrations. José Luis enjoys watching his girls interact and *zapatear* with the other youth at *los fandangos:*

> *En los fandangos, andan bien contentas porque andan con los de más niños. Y andan jugando, se ponen a bailar y al ratito andan pa allá, andan pa aca. Me siento contento cuando se ponen a bailar. Como decimos, están aprendiendo una cultura que les va dejar muchas alegrías hacia el futuro si le siguen dando.*[71]

[71] At the *fandangos*, they are very happy because they are with the other kids. And they play, and they will dance, and in a little while they will run over there, run over here. I feel happy when they start dancing. It's like we say, they are learning a *cultura* that is going to leave them lots of joy in the future if they continue working at it. (translation provided by author)

The youth have created their own *comunidad* within El Tallercito, they get excited when they see each other, they attend each other's birthday parties, and go trick-or-treating together.

Johanna realizes just how special it is for her daughter to grow up around *son jarocho* and El Tallercito:

> *Son jarocho* has been good for my daughter. She goes to the kid's classes, and she is into it. Especially if I don't watch, she is over there dancing, and at the *fandangos*, she will get on the *tarima*. Or if kids who have never been around *son jarocho* show up, she is right there, the first one showing them how to do things. Like at our wedding, Tallercito played, and there she was dancing *zapateado* showing the other kids how to do it, and that isn't even the first time! When my nieces and nephews come around, she does the same thing, she is like the little *maestra.* And she will remind us when its Tuesday, she'll be like I want to go to *son jarocho*, I want to go to *son jarocho*. She has made friends there, she loves Aimee's son, Joaquin. He was gone all summer, and when he came back, she screamed Joaquin and ran up and hugged him and wouldn't let him go. Learning about her *cultura*, and being surrounded by it, is important to me. And sometimes it is hard to teach our kids Spanish and get them interested but the other day at *taller* she heard us say '*de corazón'* and after at home she asked me what that meant, and I told her from the heart. And now she is getting interested in the language.

El Tallercito has become a place for Johanna's daughter Annabelle to discover the beauty of our *cultura* and our ancestral knowledge (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). She has become the little *maestra*, sharing *son jarocho* with new comers, truly embodying Tallercito's welcoming spirit that she felt when she first arrived.

Perhaps Anabelle doesn't yet fully realize just how impactful *son jarocho* will be on her. Johanna shared that:

> I feel like we won't see all of the affects *son jarocho* and Tallercito have on her now, but when she grows up and as she is getting older, anytime she hears *son jarocho*, she is going to connect that to her mom, and her childhood. That will be her childhood memories, growing up around *son*, in *la comunidad*, and around the powerful women in Tallercito and *son jarocho*. I mean we have so many amazing women in the group, and for my daughter and the other young girls to see that, it is powerful. It is going to be beautiful. This is her life, she is growing up around *son jarocho*, and what a beautiful thing. I can't wait to take her to *México* so she can see the other kids playing *jarana*, dancing *zapateado*, and singing.

Anabelle will make her first trip to Veracruz this upcoming Christmas, when she, Ricardo, and Johanna will travel to Los Tuxtlas in Veracruz and become immersed in *son jarocho cultura* and traditions.

*Son jarocho* and the *comunidad* of El Tallercito will have a lasting impact on the youth involved, and has already began to shape and inform the way they interact with one another. They are welcoming and inviting, they are learning how to *convivir* with each other through the *convivencia* they experience at Tallercito. The youth are always ready to share what they know with a new *tallerista.* El Tallercito has become a place for storytelling, for connecting with their *cultura*, a place to express themselves creatively through music and dance, even a place to (re)claim Spanish (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012).

## CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Storytelling—*cuentos* that are passed down from generation to generation—is a powerful source of knowledge, a way to learn stories of our past, our ancestors' way of keeping traditions, rituals, and *cultura* alive (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). El Tallercito co-facilitator and founding member Cuauhtli Reyna shared:

> My father would always tell me stories about his grandmother, who was Lipan Apache…I would see this pictures of her…she had these very strong, wide cheekbones. I think I was maybe nine when I went with my dad to look for her. As in look for evidence of her…to find out who she was, and what tribe she was from, and things like that.

Searching for our ancestors, finding out their stories, shapes how we create and self-make identity, so much so, that we often times even go searching for them. Through the *testimonios* shared by thirteen *talleristas*—my own *testimonio* included—as a Chicanx collective and community, we have told our stories through our eyes, told them in our own voices.

*Son jarocho* becomes the tool, a way for Chicanxs searching for roots to find a connection to their *antepasados* through community music and dance. *Son jarocho* is the community music that bridges the gap—the generational gap, the gap in *cultura* which was lost because it wasn't passed down from generation to generation. A gap caused by continued (re)colonization. A gap caused by the economic displacement of people in *México* and throughout the Southwestern U.S., the migration caused by the displacement, and the shifts from agricultural economies and small family farms to large capitalistic factory economies. For each of *lxs talleristas* who shared their in-depth *testimonio*, Día de los Muertos was a transformative ritual that helped them connect to their ancestors. Rescuing traditions and rituals through *son jarocho* becomes a way for Chicanxs to decolonize themselves, finding themselves through the traditions and rituals of their *antepasados*, using this ancestral knowledge to reshape and reconstruct self-identity (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012).

The *fandango* provides the cultural space to come together as a community and through *convivencia,* collectively create music, dance, and song. Tallercito *fandangos* become a place to grow, explore, and transform together as a community; all while discovering the beauty of our ancestral knowledge and celebrating the survival of that knowledge through the living traditions and *cultura* of *son jarocho* (Anzaldúa, 2002; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Even the youth who participate in El Tallercito have made *fandangos* a place of networking and creating, modeling the inclusivity that the adults show each other in *taller* (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012).

El Tallercito has provided *lxs talleristas* with tools for "mass disruption," as Cuauhtli expressed, at the social justice *marchas*. They make noise with their *versos* and with their *jaranas, lxs talleristas* provide the soundtrack for several social justice *causas* in our *comunidad*. The *talleristas* have become *artivista*s—activists who use their art as a tool for social justice—their *jaranas* becoming the battle cry, calling all Chicanxs to the *marchas*, inviting them to stand in solidarity as a *comunidad.* For some *talleristas*, *son jarocho* and El Tallercito have become *el corazón y el alma* of the *marchas*.

The transnational relationships that *talleristas* have formed through the *intercambios culturales* with *maestros/as* from *México*, have been a way to connect to their past and discover the beauty within our collective knowledge (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). El Tallercito has provided *lxs talleristas* with a place to heal, deconstruct, and reflect on the lack of representation and unequal access to educational opportunities throughout their academic careers. More research needs to be done by Chicanxs on how *son jarocho* is being used as a methodology in non-traditional educational settings, filling the gaps in academic representation and access that so many Chicanxs still face today.

Everything about El Tallercito de Son SATX is homegrown, grassroots, the result of the immense need that Chicanxs feel for community, *comunidad*—a place to call home. Together, through *son jarocho* and it's *cultura*, Chicanxs created a safe space, a third space *un Mundo Zurdo* (Anzaldúa, 1983), a place to be themselves, a place to be free to create their own realities. For the entire *comunidad* of El Tallercito de Son, being *presente*[72], having a voice that is heard, is a right that will always be fought for. Documenting not only the emergence of spaces like El Tallercito and the important role they play in our communities, but the *testimonios* of the Chicanxs who create those spaces is necessary.

More research is needed on the power that *son jarocho* has to heal the wounds caused by (re)colonization among the black and brown communities. *Son jarocho* as an indigenous, African, mestizo resistance music can become a space where black and brown communities can come together to heal through *música,* through *cultura*, through resistance of (re)colonization. In the future, I look forward to working with *talleristas* and El Tallercito using *son jarocho*—the community space the fandango creates—to heal the wounds that black and brown communities have suffered because of (re)colonization.

El Tallercito as a research site gives Chicanxs a say in how their work is documented, researched, and applied. *Lxs talleristas* make sure their work remains accessible to other Chicanx communities—as well as communities of color—as a model to self-empower through researching and documenting their own stories. El Tallercito de Son SATX provides a transformative cultural space where Chicanxs of all ages, from all walks of life, have remade, reshaped, and recreated their personal and social identities through *son jarocho*, *creando comunidad a través de la cultura.*

*c/s*

[72] Present (translation provided by author)

## Afterword

When I was growing up in the barrio in *SanTana, Califas*[73], a little brown girl, daughter of a *piscador de uvas*[74] and a secretary, never in my wildest dreams did I think I would go to graduate school—much less do research in something that I love, something that is a part of me. When I moved to San Antonio to begin the graduate studies program in Bicultural-Bilingual studies, I had no idea what I was doing. When I moved to San Antonio, I never could have imaged the incredible, life-changing journey I would embark upon.

El Tallercito de Son SATX is a collective born out of a hunger, a need, a want to fight (re)colonization and decolonize ourselves through *cultura,* through *música y el baile.* I have had the privilege these past 25 years as a student of traditional dances from Mexico, and for the past 17 years, I have been a student of *son jarocho.* I was both humbled and honored when some of my c*ompañerxs* asked me to share that knowledge with them. In April 2018, El Tallercito de Son SATX will celebrate our three-year anniversary. From the very early stages, I knew that this *colectivo*, this project, was going to be something special, something *único*[75], something *necesario*[76]. I watched our community grow from five, to 15, to over 50. We handed out flyers, inviting the community to our free *talleres*, planting the seeds, watering them with each *fandango*, with each pot of free pozole.

When I began imagining a world where the work El Tallercito does, the community it has created, could be the topic of a master's thesis, I never actually thought it would be possible. Through the guidance of amazing professors, perseverance, and the support of my parents, my

[73] SanTana, Califas: The author was born and raised in Santa Ana, California. In los barrios where Chicanxs lived, worked, and played, con *cariño*—with love—we called the barrio SanTana. The same for California, Chicanxs shorten it to Califas.
[74] *Piscador de uvas:* migrant farmworker who picks grapes
[75] unique (translation provided by author)
[76] necessary (translation provided by author)

*pareja*, and of the Tallercito *comunidad,* I find myself in awe as I complete this massive undertaking. The *testimonios* that were shared here only solidified my commitment to documenting our stories—Chicanx stories—by us, for us. I am honored, humbled, and excited to be documenting our stories, stories that will shed light on what it means to be Chicanx in 2017 and beyond, in San Antonio, *Tejas*. The *testimonios* shared here document the ways in which Chicanxs can use *cultura,* in our case *son jarocho*, to reshape and construct identityand as a vehicle for social justice.

As I embarked on my graduate school journey, I had no clue what I was doing, where I would end up, or how I was even going to pay my tuition. I kept waiting for things to settle, and slow down, but that moment never came. As I began working on this thesis, I took on more responsibility as a member of the Executive Leadership Team at San Anto Cultural Arts, where I write the grants and develop programming as the Development Manager. I fulfilled a life-long dream of acting on stage, in Chicanx plays, *estilo* Teatro Campesino. That dream came true twice during my last year of graduate school. In March 2017, I had the honor of playing *La Pasionaria de Tejas*, Emma Tenayuca in the Guadalupe Cultural Arts production of "That's Not Fair!/No Es Justo: Emma Tenayuca's Struggle for Justice." And as I completed this very afterword, I finished a run as the lead in a play called "*Adelita*," a Westside story about a Chicana running for senate. It was a dream come true, playing the lead in two different plays about strong women—brown, Mexican-American, Chicana *mujeres*. It was such an honor.

People constantly asked me, "Aye, Keli, how are you doing it? How do you make the time?" My *profe* asked me to make sure to include it somewhere in my thesis, so here, *aquí les va*: I did it because me *dio le pinche gana*, because I fucking felt like it. I decided that I was no longer going to give up on amazing opportunities because life, because my thesis, because—

insert whatever excuse here. I made a decision, I made a choice, and I made it work. The people in my life that I am so blessed to be surrounded by, supported me, and said that I could do anything I put my mind to. So, I did, and I did it for me. To show all the haters in the world, *sabes qué*, you know what, Chicanas do it better!

I look forward to continuing my work in the *comunidad*, away from the academy, which has not been a very welcoming or kind place. I have struggled with racist, white entitled professors, who have used intimidation tactics to keep me quite and complacent when I disagreed with their definitions of Chicano aesthetics. I have battled the bureaucratic processes that were not meant to be navigated by first-generation college students; always left to feel less than, with no resources, with no support. I am ready to leave the academy, and who knows if I will return. I have realized that the work I am so passionate about, the work that feeds my soul, is more important than any degree. The work we do as a *colectivo* changes lives, has the power to *crear comunidad.*

This part of the journey is over—*si se pudo*. I am ready. Now, let us shift (Anzaldúa, 1983).

*c/s*

## APPENDIX A

## A Visual Representation of El Tallercito de Son SATX

Figure A: El Tallercito at the 2017 César Chávez March


Figure B: El Tallercito at the 2016 International Women's Day March

Figure C: Tallercito youth with visiting *maestro* Claudio Vega in 2016


Figure D: Tallercito *Fandango* with visiting *maestro* Claudio Vega

Figure E: El Tallercito's first Día de los Muertos *fandango* and community *altar*, November 2015

Figure F: Visiting *maestro* Andres Flores with Tallercito youth, December 2016

Figure G: El Tallercito *fandango* at San Anto Cultural Arts with visiting *maestro* Claudio Vega and *maestra* Raquel Vega, May 2017

Figure H: El Tallercito with their workshop participants at NACCS Tejas Foco 2017

Figure I: El Tallercito at UTSA for the SSGA Mundo Zurdo Conference, November 2016


Figure J: El Tallercito *taller de jarana* with visiting *maestro* Claudio Vega, 2016

Figure K: El Tallercito *taller* for youth with visiting *maestros* Claudio and Raquel Vega
May 2017


Figure L: El Tallercito, *Presente!* at the 2017 César Chávez *Marcha*

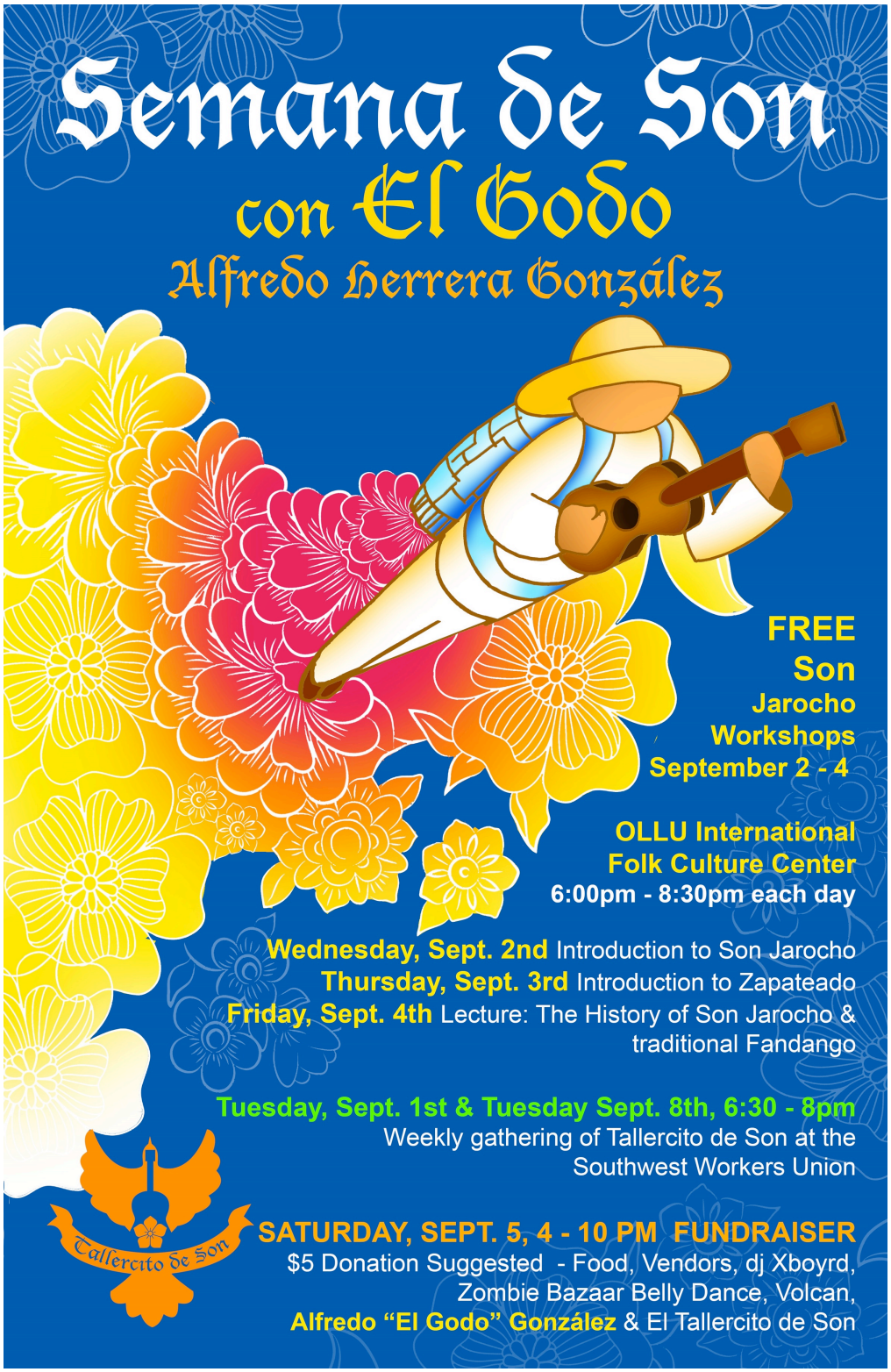

Figure M: El Tallercito de Son Flyer Created by Ernesto Cuevas, Jr.

Figure N: El Tallercito Flyer Created by Ernesto Cuevas, Jr.

Figure O: El Tallercito Flyer Created by Ernesto Cuevas, Jr.

## APPENDIX B

Lay Summary

*Saludos* Fellow *Tallerista*,

As you know, in April 2015, myself, along with other founding members, created the collective that is El Tallercito de Son SATX, which you are a proud member of.

As I navigate the complexities of graduate school, UTSA as an institution of higher learning, and the "academy" as a whole, I have begun to feel a void—the Chicanx voice. The books I read in class about Chicanx history, Chicanx art, and Chicanx literature are often times written by a white person. The stories, counter-narratives, and knowledge that is documented are 100% Chicanx, but the name on the cover of the work is too often "Johnson" or "Smith" or "Insert Here" typical Anglo-European last name.

As I have shared, grown, and learned from you as a member of this collective, I have been inspired by your voice, your story, your resistance. Together, we have become a strong force in our community, and I want to respect each of your stories by documenting them—Chicanx stories, documented by Chicanxs, for Chicanxs.

This research project aims to add diversity to the ways in which Chicanx Studies, Cultural Studies, and research projects are being conducted. Through this research project, Chicanx communities are documenting and researching our own histories, herstories[77], and theirstories[78]—our own counter-stories of self-made identity, and our reexamination of roots and *cultura.* **The purpose of this qualitative study will be to describe the ways in which members of El Tallercito de Son understand their identities and create community through the musical and cultural tradition that is *Son Jarocho.***

I ask you to join me in this journey, and together we will document El Tallercito's impact on the Chicanxs (me and you) who have become a part of the community.

I would like to document your *testimonio*—your story, your counter-narrative—through three in-depth interviews, lasting 60-90 minutes each. You have become such an integral part of the collective, and as part of the group, have received attention from the local community. For this reason, I would like your identity to remain true to you, using your name and any in-depth details you share. However, should you feel more comfortable to remain anonymous, I will ask you to provide a pseudonym that I will use in the final publication.

When I interview you, I would like your permission to voice-record, video-record, and take photographs. I will use these recordings to help remind me about what we talked about. At a later time, the videos, photographs and/or recordings may be used in a mini-documentary about El Tallercito de Son SATX. If you do not want your image and/or recordings used, I will respect your wishes, please just let me know what you feel comfortable sharing, and to what extent when the time arises.

I will also be conducting *Pláticas*, or informal focus group sessions, where the *talleristas* interviewed discuss themes and ideas that came up throughout interviews and/or Tallercito events. I cannot guarantee your anonymity in these *pláticas*; therefore, if you wish to remain anonymous, you do not have to participate in the *pláticas*. I will also be observing at rehearsals,

[77] The author would like to note that "histories" includes the pronoun "his" as in male stories, it is important to create space for "herstories" stories that are "hers"

[78] The author would like to note that there are more than two genders, therefore it is important to create a space for "their" stories as well.

*fandangos*, community events, and performances. I will also use social media postings as a resource to better document feelings and emotions that correspond to El Tallercito.
This research study will help you document your story in your voice. There is a risk that your story will cause others to give you negative attention. If at any time you decide you'd rather not participate in this study—even if we have already begun—I will support and respect your decision to not go any further. If you decide to not participate, nothing you have shared will be used, and your standing as a *tallerista* and member of El Tallercito will in no way be affected.

If you have any questions, concerns, or comments, please feel free to contact me at kelicabunoc@gmail.com or 210-XXX-XXXX.

Thank you for embarking on this very special journey of documenting, creating, and healing through sharing.

*En Comunidad*,

Keli Rosa Cabunoc Romero
*c/s*

## APPENDIX C

## Interview Guide Protocol

**Background and Identity (1st Interview):**

1. What is your name, and what are your pronouns?
2. Where are you from? Where is your family from?
3. How do you identify? Tell me about how you came to be a "insert term used here"?
    a. If participant did not use "Chicanx" in part of identity, ask: Do you also identify as a "Chicanx"? Why or why not?

***Son Jarocho* and El Tallercito de Son SATX (2nd and 3rd Interview):**

1. Do you remember the first time you ever heard *son jarocho*? If yes, tell me about it.
2. What made you want to learn more about *son jarocho*?
3. When was the first time you heard about El Tallercito?
4. What made you want to come to El Tallercito?
5. Tell me about your first time (or first few times) at El Tallercito.
6. We say *"creando comunidad a través de la cultura..."* what does that mean to you?
7. How do you, as an individual member of El Tallercito feel that you create community through *cultura*?
8. How has El Tallercito and *son jarocho* helped you to re-shape and self-make your identity as a Chicanx?
9. How has El Tallercito made you feel in community? How have the relationships formed in the collective affected your everyday life?
10. How has El Tallercito become a vehicle for other ways of producing and sharing knowledge? How have you incorporated *son jarocho* and El Tallercito into your everyday life?

11. How has El Tallercito used *son jarocho* as a vehicle for social justice? In your personal life? In the community of San Antonio? Any other *cuasa*[79]?
12. How has El Tallercito formed transnational communities and relationships with people in *México*? How do these transnational relationships and communities affect you as an individual, in terms of identity and *cultura*? El Tallercito as a collective?
13. How has El Tallercito, its transnational relationships, and commitment to social justice made you feel as a Chicanx? How have these relationships affected other areas of your life?
14. Please share anything else that you would like to with me about El Tallercito, *son jarocho*, and all that those entail.

[79] Cause

## APPENDIX D

## ***Pláticas* Guide Protocol**

**1st *Plática*:**

- How has El Tallercito de Son SATX used traditional *son jarocho* music from Veracruz, *México* to "create community" and identity amongst Chicanxs in San Antonio, TX?

**2nd *Plática*:**

- How have *lxs talleristas* used *son jarocho* and El Tallercito as a vehicle for social justice in the community? As a vehicle for producing collective knowledge?

**3rd *Plática*:**

- How has El Tallercito formed transnational communities and relationships with people in *México*?

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# VITA

Keli Rosa Cabunoc Romero is a dancer, musician, performer, *artivista*, and scholar who grew up in Santa Ana, California and now resides in San Antonio, Texas. Keli Rosa counts with a long record of community activism, social justice, and involvement in traditional Mexican music and dance. She attended The City University of New York, Hunter College in New York City, where she completed a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Social Research.

Keli Rosa looks forward to continuing as co-facilitator of FREE community *talleres*, with her *pareja*, Cuauhtli Reyna, at El Tallercito de Son, a collective of students, *artivistas*, teachers, queers, artists, activists, community organizers, and musicians who play traditional *son jarocho* music from Veracruz, *México* in the spirit of international struggles. She looks forward to continuing community-based decolonial research in the Chicanx community of San Antonio. Keli Rosa hopes to expand El Tallercito's youth *talleres*, as well as the number of *maestros/as* that Tallercito is able to bring from *México* each year.

Keli Rosa continues to use cultural arts and performance arts as a tool to fight (re)colonization, educate, and to engage the community in new and innovative ways. In addition to her community work with El Tallercito, she has also began acting in local plays that tell Mexican-American and Chicanx stories. She believes in the power that the arts—*son jarocho, cultura, teatro*—have to give voice to the many injustices that Chicanx and other Latinx communities face today.