

BUSCANDO CALIFORNIA



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Editor: Kat Avila
e-mail: kavila@ucsd

EDITOR'S NOTES



While I was sitting in my car at a stoplight, I was surprised to see how many people were begging at the intersection. Usually there's one or two people, but I counted five people with cardboard signs. Later, some time after I got home, I went outside only to find a cholo--"Don't worry about it," he says--relieving himself on my neighbor's palm tree. And the neighbors across the street had their stereo cranked up for salsa time. Ah, home sweet home.

Thank god for Culture Clash. I went to see their newest show, S.O.S., at the Japan America Theatre that night (7/11). S.O.S. is a wickedly funny look at the L.A. riots/rebellion. But the show also dares to tip the "City of the Angels" on its side to uncover, among other things, cultural sexism, racism that divides people of color, the mystery behind no Latinos on "Star Trek," Chicano bunnies, and spouse and child abuse.

Memorable moments from the show were bodybuilder Ramona Gonzales as Malinche with Richard Montoya draped over her legs ("¡Qué viva la mujer!"), Mickey Mouse outmuscling vatons in American

Me Tall, Ric Salinas hawking L.A. scenic riot maps, Herbert Siguenza as the long-suffering madre who talks about police brutality as she beats her son, and Culture Clash quietly sweeping up the parts of an LAPD doll piñata as Maria Elena Gaitan plays her violincello.

The next day I flew out to New Mexico to attend a research seminar for Latino graduate students. I saw Elena Avila and Jerry Mondragon's Tu y yo (7/14) at the Santa Fe Community Theater. The play centers around the developing relationship and complications between a modern-day Chicano and Chicana. Elena and Jerry each wrote their parts separately. As performers, they were both engaging to watch on the stage.

Elena, who works as a psychiatric nurse and curandera, will hopefully continue to write and act. As an audience member said to Elena during the post-play discussion, "I feel proud to be a Chicana tonight."

I also met Ramón A. Flores (7/24), Yale graduate and the artistic director of La Compañía de Teatro de Albuquerque (sic). He gave me and Yolanda Flores, who is

studying the work of Chicana playwrights, a ride to the 740-seat KiMo (sic) Theatre where he has his office. We received a tour of the theater and looked at hang posters of past programs of La Compañía. As souvenirs, we were given program booklets and posters from La Compañía's last two shows, A Chicano Christmas Carol and Tierra Encantada.

Ramón A. Flores and Cecilio García-Camarillo adapted A Chicano Christmas Carol from Charles Dickens' story. "What do the English Only movement, Japanese Investors, Tiny Tim, our Mexican bretheran (sic), Desert Storm, luminarias and biscochitos have in common?" asks La Compañía's 1991-92 season brochure, "They all come to visit businessman Erikel Codos one Christmas Eve." As Ramón recounted the play, and Tierra Encantada (a love story where ethnic i.d.-castizo, Genízaro, or mestizo --becomes a source of comedy), I could not help but envy the people in Albuquerque for the cultural/political/regional relevance of their professional theatre.

Back in Los Angeles, I caught the last day (8/1) of The National Women's Theatre Festival. Monica Palacios

ended the festival with selections from Latin Lesbos Comic. In one delicious segment, she recreates the reaction of each member of her familia to her coming out.

Caridad Svich was present for the reading of her play Gleaning/Rebusca (8/3), about two young Cuban-American women roommates, at the Centro Cultural de la Raza. Cristina Soria who read Sonia is always a pleasure to watch and listen to. But the noise from planes flying overhead and the colorful wall mural that the actors sat in front of overwhelmed the set at times.

Thanks to a comp from Brenda Schumacher of Fresh Dish, I enjoyed Marga Gomez's Memory Tricks (8/5) at the Gaslamp Quarter Theatre. (The last time I saw this former

Culture Clash member was as part of a performance package for UCSD's Cultural Diversity in the American Theatre Conference (11/9/90).) In her performance monologue, Marga deftly jumps in and out of various autobiographical characters, mainly to spotlight the trying (meditation mantra--"I'll never be like my mother"), but loving ("A daughter wants to be with her mother") relationship between herself and her exotic dancer mom at various ages. See the show on a Tuesday or Wednesday and save about \$10.

Many people have been supportive of Buscando California in their own little ways. Muchos gracias to Jorge Huerta for letting me sit in on his interview (7/2) with

Armando José Durán and Robert Villanueva of For Every Child, picking up dinner (I really did forget my money in my car), and giving me his comp ticket for the show. That's a lot to ask for, even from familia. A bug for Arizona State graduate student Helen Tafuya-Barraza for showing me around her hometown Albuquerque. George Morales --what a coincidence--I bump into you again (7/30) at Rancho Santiago College and you have another video tape to show of La Raza Kids. Also, thank you, Eloise de Leon of the Centro Cultural de la Raza, for the comps to Centro events. Every little bit helps since I plow the money I save back into the newsletter.



La Calavera holds up a green card and sickle in his hands. Part of a Victor Ochoa (1985) mural at UCSD.

CONFERENCES:

Sept. 25-27, 1992

"Crossing Borders/Cruzando fronteras: The Next 500 Years/ Los siguientes 500 años"
National Assoc. of Latino Arts & Culture,
1300 Guadalupe St., San Antonio, TX 78207-5519.

Nov. 19-21, 1992

"Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage Project"
Proposals due June 1, 1992.
Contact Maria Teresa Marrero, Univ. of Houston, Arte Publico Press, Houston, TX, 77204-2090.

February 4-6, 1993

"Postmodernity & Cultural Criticism (of Chicano, Latino, and Spanish Theatres)"
Proposals due Oct. 1, 1992. Contact Juan Villegas, Dept. of Spanish & Portuguese, Univ. of Calif., Irvine, CA, 92717, (714) 856-6901.

TEATRO '92 CALENDARIO



BILINGUAL FOUNDATION OF THE ARTS
421 North Ave. 19
Los Angeles, CA 90031
(213) 225-4044



Sept. 22-Dec. 6
La celestina/The Spanish Bard
By Fernando de Rojas

BURBAGE THEATRE ENSEMBLE
2330 Sawtelle Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90064
(310) 478-0897

May 21-July 10; Thurs. 8:30 p.m.,
Fri. 7:30 p.m.; \$15
For Every Child
(Jimmy Santiago Baca's poetry)
"Trying to run this ache out
of my heart."
By Armando José Durán, Joanne
Gordon & Robert Villanueva
Directed by Joanne Gordon

PROJECTS WANTED: Social and
political issue-oriented pieces.
Performance art. No sitcoms.
Send synopsis/sample dialogue
to artistic director Andy Gripps.

CENTRO CULTURAL DE LA RAZA
2130-1 Pan American Plaza, #1
San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 235-6135



June 6-July 19
Historias portátiles/Portable
Stories Border Realities VII
Border Art Workshop/Taller de
Arte Fronteriza. Two ways to
enter the exhibit--one through a
tunnel, the other through a door
with a million-dollar bill
painted on the opposite side.
Exhibit goes next to Sydney,
Australia.

Aug. 7-Sept. 20
La mano gráfica (art)
Leonilo Doloricon and Diego Ríos

(CENTRO continued)

July 10 & 11; 8 p.m.; \$6
Banana Split
"What do you check on the
ethnicity box?"
Kip Fulbeck, a Chinese-English-
Irish-American visual artist,
in a multi-media essay about
being "hapa" (part-European).

Aug. 21 & 22; 8 p.m.; \$7
Penny Envy (perf. art)
Rock musician Sergio Arau
and actress Yarelli Arizmendi

Aug. 28 & 29; 8 p.m.; \$7
Indian Tales (perf. art)
James Luna, a Luiseno Indian from
the La Jolla Indian Reservation.

AITLAN PLAYREADING PROJECT
Starts at 7:30 p.m., \$4
8/3--Cleaning/Rebusca
By Caridad Svich

8/31--The Child Diego
By Carlos Morton

EAST WEST PLAYERS
4424 Santa Monica Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90029
(213) 660-0366



July 6-Aug. 16
Summer acting workshop.

GASLAMP QUARTER THEATRE
444 4th Ave. (Bahn Cosmo.)
San Diego, CA
(619) 234-9583



July 23-Aug. 29; T-Sat. 8 p.m.,
Sun. 2 p.m., \$10 (TW), \$18 (THSu),
\$20 (FSa). Fresh Dish, a gay/
lesbian arts production co., hosts
Marça Gomer's Memory Tricks. For
info. about other Fresh Dish
events, contact Brenda Shumacher,
(619) 298-4916.

GUADALUPE CULTURAL ARTS CENTER
1300 Guadalupe St.
San Antonio, TX 78207-5519

July 15 (play deadline)
International Quincentennial
Playwriting Competition
1st prize: \$5,000 and world
premiere at the TENAI Festival
Honorable Mention: \$500

Nov. 10-15
TENAI XVI International Festival
Festival coordinator: Jorge Piña

JAPAN AMERICA THEATRE
244 S. San Pedro St.
Los Angeles, CA 90012
(213) 680-3700



July 9 (benefit), 10, 11--8 p.m.;
July 12--2 p.m.; \$16 adv., \$18
at door
S.O.S.
"Save our children now!"
Comedy troupe Culture Clash with
a "a reaction to the events [L.A.
riots] that shook us all."

Aug. 15; 8 p.m.; charge by phone,
\$12 (Doizaki Gallery)
An Evening with Charlie Chin,
a Chinese storyteller/songwriter
in a journey thru Asian America.

Aug. 16; 7 p.m.; charge by phone,
\$8 (Doizaki Gallery)
Rough Stuff
Monologues by Amy Hill, Don
Maquill, and Marilyn Tokuda.

Aug. 21; 2 p.m.; charge by phone,
\$12 (reading at Doizaki Gallery)
Godzilla Comes to Little Tokyo
By Karen Yamashita

Aug. 29; 2 p.m.; charge by phone,
\$12 (Doizaki Gallery)
Nansanar Canteen, perf. about the
Japanese-American internment exp.
By Joyce Wako

(CALENDARIO continued)

MARGO ALBERT THEATRE
3540 N. Mission Rd.
Los Angeles, CA
(213) 223-2475

July 17-18; 8 p.m.; \$12 adv.,
\$15 at door

Chicano flor y canto
Hosts El Teatro Campesino and
Plaza de la Raza.

SOUTH COAST REPERTORY
655 Town Center Dr.
Costa Mesa, CA 92628-2197
(714) 957-4033



June 18-July 5; \$22-\$13
Comedy troupe Latins Anonymous

July 25; 8 p.m.; \$25
Comedia esta noche/Comedy Tonight
Hispanic Playwrights Project
(HPP) benefit. Latins Anonymous,
Chicano Secret Service, Culture
Clash.

HPP READINGS (\$6-\$2 each reading)
8/7; 7:30 p.m.--Cocks Have Claws
& Wings to Fly, by Amparo Garcia

8/8; 2:30 p.m.--Bitter Bones and
Gardens, by Luis Alfaro

8/8; 7:30 p.m.--Kuba, by Roger
Schirra

STAGES THEATRE CENTER
1540 N. McCadden Place
Hollywood, CA 90028
(213) 466-1767



July 27, 1992; 8 p.m.; \$5
Dreaming in Cuban (reading)
Novel by Cristina Garcia

NOTE: Marcella Meharq, the
dramaturg, is open to proposals
for Monday night readings. Send
a query letter--no scripts.

EL TEATRO DE LA ESPERANZA
P.O. Box 40578
San Francisco, CA 94140-0578
(415) 255-2320



Spring 1990-Fall 1992 (tour)
Real Women Have Curves
By Josefina López
Directed by Rodrigo Duarte-Clark

July 13-Aug. 23
ISADORA AGUIRRE PLAYWRITING LAB
READINGS (free) at the Mission
Cultural Center.
7/27; 7 p.m.--Dancing With the
Missing, by Roy Conboy. Play will
be produced. October opening.

8/22; 7 p.m.--Rosita's Traveling
Jalapeno Kitchen, by Rodrigo
Duarte-Clark

8/23; 7 p.m.--Water Signs Factory,
by Alfonso Ramirez

(date?)--Macario, by Richard Talavera

TROY CAFE
418 East First St. (at Alameda)
Los Angeles, CA
(213) 617-0790

July 3 & 4, 17 & 18; \$5
Comedy troupe Chicano Secret
Service

July 24-Aug. 1
THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S THEATRE
FESTIVAL
1647 18th St.
Santa Monica, CA 90404

Events at UCLA Freud Playhouse.
Includes Theresa Chaver's
L.A. Real, Betty Gonzalez Wash's
Rey, I Don't Need You, I Don't
Need Anybody, and Monica
Palacios with excerpts from
Latin Lerbo Comic.

NOTE: Deadline for proposals
for 1993 is Oct. 31, 1992.
Include a cover sheet about work
with specific costs/requirements
breakdown, a video or full script
of work, and a self-addressed,
stamped envelope for return of
proposal and video/or script. No
phone calls, please.

PBS BROADCAST:
Aug. 12, 1992; 10:30 p.m.
1492 Revisited
(Includes the Counter Colon-
ialismo art exhibition.)
Produced by Paul Espinosa

Kat Avila, BUSCAMDO editor
U.C. San Diego
Dept. of Communication, 0503
La Jolla, CA 92093-0503



"I want to go to the theatre to be challenged.
I don't want to be entertained. I can turn on
'In Living Color' and be entertained."

--Danny de la Paz (1992)

We had lunch (6/28/92) at a Mexican restaurant by the United Artists cable station in Whittier. Earlier, Danny and his friend, Carlos Lopez, had been editing a video of a play Danny had directed called A Day in December by Nancy de los Santos. Tim Keeler, the director of cable station Channel 53, also joined us for lunch.

Danny, a Chicano, has been acting for 17 years now. When people ask me who Danny was in the movie American Me, I tell them he was the vato who killed his brother, and then they remember. Though American Me didn't generate a lot more opportunities for Danny, he has kept himself busy nonetheless developing projects with Tim. In another week he would be working at the Sundance Children's Festival.

D: Danny de la Paz
K: Kat Avila
T: Tim Keeler

D: . . . The right to bear arms was put in there because they [the Europeans] had come across the water and they had fled oppression. And when they were over there fighting with their own kind--white against white--they used guns to fight each other. So when they came here they wanted to make sure that one of the things they guaranteed was the right to continue to do that in case those same people--their own kind--came across the water and sought them, that they would come across the water and try to destroy the new thing that they were going to create here.

The problem was there were already people when they

got here. And they didn't respect that. So they basically just destroyed the culture that already existed with their weapons.

You have to go back and correct that. You have to go back and you have to make people understand what's happened.

Why should we feel like strangers in our own land? This, right where we are sitting, right now, used to be Mexico. This used to be Mexico. Why should you come here and call me a wetback? You who came across the Atlantic are calling me a wetback? It doesn't make any sense.

But who talks about these things? Nobody talks about these things. Nobody has the balls to talk about them. I want to talk about them. Spike Lee talks about them. John Singleton is talking about them. I want to talk about them, too.

Obviously I'm not celebrating Christopher Columbus because I have no respect for him.

K: GOING BACK TO THEATRE, WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE SOME TRENDS IN CHICANO THEATRE?

D: I see adapting other people's works as kind of sad. I think that's a mistake. And I certainly don't think that people should be doing things in the theatre that are safe and quaint.

I'm tired of going to the theater because all I see are safe, quaint things. I got tired of it so I haven't really gone very much anymore.

I want to go to the theatre to be challenged. I don't want to go to be

entertained. I can turn on "In Living Color" and be entertained.

T: DO YOU HAVE TO MAKE YOUR AUDIENCE GASP WHEN SOMETHING IS SAID OR SOMETHING IS DONE?

D: No. Just make them think. If you're a Chicano, you have a cultural responsibility. People will argue with me and say no we don't. I can do whatever I want to do. Fine, fine.

We talk about the work of local comedy troupes-- Chicano Secret Service, Latins Anonymous, and Culture Clash.

K: SOME EURO-AMERICANS WERE OFFENDED BY THE STUFF THEY DID. YOU'RE SAYING THAT CULTURE CLASH DIDN'T GO FAR ENOUGH.

D: If they're offended, then you're doing your job. That's how I feel about it. They're doing their job. They're not there to appease people. They're not there to entertain them. Put a dime in their little hat and let them dance. That's not what it's about.

K: IS THIS HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT THEATRE IN GENERAL?

D: Absolutely.

K: NO PLACE FOR THE CLASSICS?

D: Fuck the classics. Write new classics. Stop living in the past.

T: GET RID OF NOSTALGIA? NOSTALGIA IS IN RIGHT NOW.

(DE LA PAZ continued)

D: Nostalgia is only in because people are afraid to look at what's happening right now. They don't know how to deal with it. Nostalgia is a way for them not having to deal with it. It's perfect. They can still sleep. Theatre needs to wake them up.

Danny works with young people whenever he can. He visits junior highs and elementary schools to give the kids pep talks and to share his experiences in the entertainment industry.

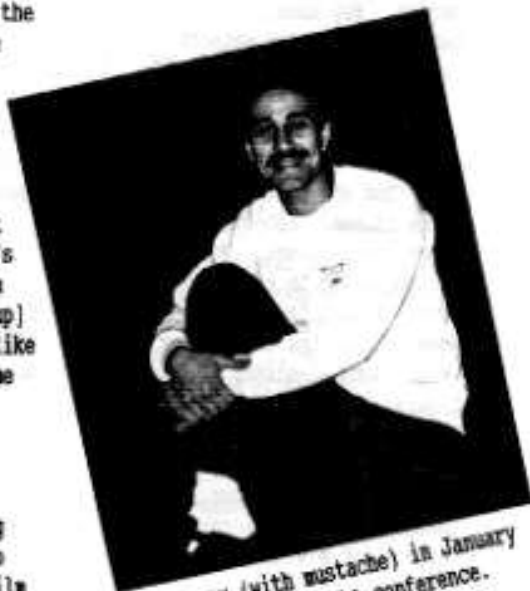
D: There's a lot of talent out there right now. That's why I wanted to direct them [talking about a local group] because I really feel I'd like to be a part of guiding some of that talent.

There's a whole new generation of young people that are coming up now. Actors, writers, some young directors. I don't know so much theatre directors. Film directors. Because, I guess, the money. They want to make some bucks and reach a large audience. And they can't do that in the theatre.

Theatre suffers. Maybe that's why theatre is so slow to change. There's so little incentive for people to get involved.

K: WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING TO BE DOING IN THE FUTURE?

D: Stop bitching and moaning and make my statements in my work.



Danny (with mustache) in January at the UCSD MECHA conference.



Carlos Garcia on his way to the interview. Are you sure you have enough work?



L. to R.: Carlos Lopez, asst. ed. at Concorde Pictures; actor/director Danny de la Paz; and Tim Keeler, director of Channel 53 (South Whittier Community Access) on break.

CARLOS GARCIA INTERVIEW



after you

The first time I was supposed to interview Carlos Garcia I got stuck in rush-hour traffic on the 91 freeway on a Friday evening--something only a person who'd gotten too much sun on the brain would have attempted to drive. Now, when I schedule interviews, I check traffic reports first.

We met at his Colton office (7/1). His wife, Jackie, works in Chicano Student Programs at Univ. of Calif., Riverside. She is also a photographer. They have two sons, one of whom is an actor himself.

Carlos graduated with a degree in Communications (class of 1980) from Cal State Fullerton with a radio/TV/film emphasis. He directs an acting troupe called Alternatives that was formed two years ago.

C: Carlos Garcia
K: Kat Avila

C: Alternatives started out with a group of three actors who have worked in community theatre Not all of us are Latinos. One actor, she's female, white. She's just very good so she was included in the troupe. We have expanded to include other actors, not necessarily to become part of the core, but as we need them we might use them again.

But basically it was to do theatre that wasn't being done with Latino actors. The idea was to eventually get to the point where we would do original stuff that wasn't being done at all. But first we had to introduce ourselves. As people get to know us, we can start introducing original material with Latino content.

K: WHAT PRODUCTIONS HAS ALTERNATIVES DONE?

C: Under the name of Alternatives, Un Brindis to Love was the first. [ED. NOTE: This one-act play, written and directed by Carlos, was part of UCR's "On the Border/Between Bridges" International Theatre Festival last year.] We also did A Night in Veracruz

K: WAS THERE A REASON YOU DIDN'T DO UN BRINDIS TO LOVE OR A NIGHT IN VERACRUZ WHICH I THOUGHT WERE REALLY GOOD PRODUCTIONS?

C: We did try to do it. We sent out promos, flyers to different organizations that had something to do with Latinos. And there was no response We're prepared to do either play.

K: HOW MUCH NOTICE DO GROUPS NEED TO GIVE YOU?

C: Six weeks would be nice.

K: YOU MENTIONED YOU WERE DOING A FILM PROJECT RIGHT NOW. IS THAT PART OF ALTERNATIVES?

C: It's probably not, because it's so different from what we're doing. I've written other plays, and this is one I wrote before I did Un Brindis This other play was in my mind like for many years. And I won't tell you how many years. (LAUGHS) But I finally put it down on paper. It's very difficult to stage because the actors are all young, 16-19. Males, females. And one woman who's 40-60. It's called Eastside Bruja.

Carlos Garcia sat in on the 1990 Hispanic Playwrights Project writer's lab, though his play wasn't one of the three that had been selected. A group of people who had submitted plays were able to participate and talk about different aspects of playwriting. The feedback that Carlos got about Eastside Bruja was too many characters, language is bad, and material too controversial for South Coast Repertory.

K: WHAT'S EASTSIDE BRUJA ABOUT?

C: It's about a group of boys growing up in El Paso in 1958 and this woman who lives down the street who's retarded. And she has fits. When she has fits, she can foretell the future. She selects one of the group to try to save. She tries to save the lead of the play. His name is Turi. She warns him about making all these wrong choices. And, of course, he makes all the wrong choices. Turi believes that the Chicano is destined to be a loser, to be trampled down by the white establishment and there's nothing we can do about it.

The conversation turns to the movie American Me. One of Carlos's friends hated it because there was no hero in the film. Everybody was doing the wrong things. Everybody was screwing up.

(GARCIA continued)

C: But the problem is, the fact is, that's the way our society, the Chicano culture is. We make the wrong choices. For some reason. Either because we are afraid of success or because white people have told us we're going to be losers so why even try to succeed. And that's what the play addresses.

K: WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN CHICANO/LATINO THEATRE?

C: We need to show Latinos doing everyday things that have nothing to do with the fact that we are Latinos. So we might have dinner and we might be eating tortillas instead, but we're talking about something that everybody talks about. The emphasis should be on that. On the other things. Not on the tortillas.

One of the things that I am writing is a sitcom about a

family. The husband is a Democrat He's married, however, to a woman who's Republican. She's a real estate agent. They have two children. They're middle-class. They don't live in the barrio. That's what we need to see on television or in theatre. We need to see people who are not necessarily lower-income because there are some of us who are not. And we want our stories told also.



VETZA TRUSSELL INTERVIEW

It was only supposed to have been a one-hour interview at her Cherry Valley home (7/5). About four hours later--including a marvelous lunch prepared by Vetza (this is the first time I've met her)--when I got up to leave, my car wouldn't start. So it goes.

Vetza Trussell came to the U.S. as a child from Guatemala. She plays the cello, sings jazz, and acts. She's even studied Tibetan Buddhism. Four years ago, Vetza got her first acting job from José Cruz González. Since then, she has worked steadily. Most recently, she played Marta Grande, the grandmother everybody loved, in BFA's staging of My Visits With MGM.

We talked about the African-American experience and what Latinos could learn from it, multi-ethnic casting, her mother the revolutionary leader, the play she's writing about Delores Huerta, sharks that move in their sleep, the Virgen de Guadalupe "thang" in our culture, and where is sex and love in Chicano theatre. Then I ran out of tape.

V: Vetza Trussell
K: Kat Avila

V: . . . I want to be involved in theatre because I love what I'm doing. I'm not necessarily interested in becoming a Brechtian actress, but I would like to be involved in pieces that have political content, that are maybe going to help change something because change occurs so slowly You may not be alive to see the changes so that means your time is precious. You can't sit back and say, (TAKES ON AN AFFECTED TONE) "Well, I'd like to do a Neil Simon play."

K: BUT DO YOU FIND POLITICAL THEATRE IN CHICANO/LATINO THEATRE?

V: I think that you can't hit people over the head with things. I think that's really important because people are jaded--"Oh, god, another political piece. Oh, well, we'll have to hear about the oppression of the minorities." You can't do that. You have to approach the difference from a humanistic perspective.

K: HAS YOUR BEING GUATEMALAN AFFECTED CASTING DECISIONS?

V: There are people who do not cast me because I'm not Chicana. That's the kind of shit that has no place. Because if I'm a good actress and they don't have a Chicana, then why am I that different?



Vetza recalls a production she worked on. What she liked about the director about that he was interested in his actors beyond height/weight and color of eyes. He asked questions, she says, where are your politics? Where is your mind? We talk more about political theatre and the nature of racism. Differences are our richness, not our weakness, she concludes.



Vetza and her daughter, Amanda.