

# UCLA Library


Powell Blog


## Q&A with Xavier Flores and Doug Johnson, Co-Creators of the "Las Causas" Zine Exhibit

By REED BUCK on Tue, 2018-02-13 13:39

# **LAS CAUSAS**

**Zines from the Chicano Studies Research Center Archive**





**Powell Rotunda**  
**February 5-March 24 2018**

**UCLA Library**

If you're a fan of zines, chicanx studies, or the reactions of students to the changing political climate, you'll definitely want to stop by the Powell Rotunda this quarter. Currently, the Rotunda is home to an exhibit entitled *Las Causas: Zines from the Chicano Studies Research Center Archive*, in which zines assigned as Chicano Studies class projects in both 2005 and 2016 have been organized and displayed.

We spoke to Xavier Flores and Doug Johnson of the Chicano Studies Research Center (CSRC) to hear a little more about the origins and significance of this fascinating exhibit.

### **Where did the idea for this exhibit come from?**

**Xavier:** Julia Glassman [of Powell Library] came to me with the idea, after we realized we were trying to collect the same collection, the zines from Dr. Genevieve Carpio's Chicana/o Studies 10B. I saw how useful some previously donated zines were for students currently working on zines as part of the class. I had approached Genevieve to ask her if she'd be willing to donate them to the CSRC; but Julia beat me to the punch. However, when Julia received the final zines, they were much more intricate and detailed than previous years. Not wanting them to get damaged in the circulation collection, she approached me to keep the originals in the CSRC archives, but keep access copies in Powell. Then she brought up the idea of showcasing them, and that's how we started planning an exhibit.

### **Walk us through the process of creating the exhibit.**

**Doug:** I looked through all the student zines, about two hundred in all, and selected some based on highly subjective criteria including visual appeal, subject matter, and creativity. I then tried to see what patterns or themes emerged from what I had selected. Then I decided to open it up by adding zines from the *Tatiana de la Tierra* collection, just to give a glimpse of the zine world outside of these classes, and, indeed, outside of the United States.

### **Did anyone collaborate with you in putting the exhibit together?**

**X:** I initially volunteered to take the lead and have the CSRC curate the exhibit. I liked the idea of using archives to put the materials into context. That was around July. Then Doug joined our team in September. Knowing he had experience and enjoyed curating exhibitions, I asked him to take the lead on this exhibition.

### **How are zines different than other media? What can we learn from them as a medium?**

**D:** It seemed entirely possible that zines could have been made extinct by social media. People could easily blog about anything they might put in a zine. But zines abide. They're tangible, they bear the spark of humanity in a way other media do not. And they aren't reliant on a corporation to be seen.

### **What is the significance of the title, *Las Causas*? How was it chosen?**

**D:** I was looking through the zines for inspiration and a couple of them used this image of a fist on a lotería card and it really jumped out at me. Turns out that it's by an Arizona artists called El Moises, who created a whole set of politically charged lotería cards. And it got me thinking about all the different causes represented by the students' work. There are a multiplicity of different causes because civil rights are being attacked from so many different angles right now. But they are also part of a single greater cause.

### **What differences do you see between the 2005 zines and the 2016 zines?**

**D:** The 2005 zines have a wide variety of topics and reflect a broad range of interests. But formally, they are pretty straightforward. They are very close to being traditional essays that are supplemented with illustrations. By contrast, the 2016 zines are limited to just a few topics that the students covered in class. But they really

experiment with the form, reappropriating and remixing different images and cultural artifacts to move far beyond the traditional term paper.

**What other zines are available to interested viewers, both through the CSRC Archives and the UCLA Library?**

**D:** Library Special Collections has zines in a number of its collections, most notably the Darby Romeo collection, the Derek Whipple collection, and the Punk Zines and Ephemera collection. There's also a zine collection in the Powell 2nd floor reading room which can be accessed without prior arrangement.

**The 2016 zines were created during and briefly after the election of Donald Trump as president. What impact did this have on the zines?**

**D:** There's a palpable anger in a lot of them. And I think there's a true recognition that there's nothing "academic" about the issues they studied. The assault on immigrants was happening every day during the campaign. The misogyny from the Republican Party and the mainstream media was obvious and grotesque. And when you found out after the election that 53% of white women voted for a white supremacist sexual predator, you really saw why there was a need to learn about intersectionality, which was a prominent subject in many of the zines.

**What do you want viewers to take away from this exhibit?**

**D:** Not to be too Sesame Street about it, but learning can be fun. Even when you're dealing with the serious, even dire, issues represented by many of these zines, you can find a way to express your ideas creatively and vibrantly. To paraphrase Star Trek: The Next Generation: Resistance is fertile.

Thanks, Xaviera and Doug!

If you'd like to view the exhibit, it will be on display from February 5 to March 24. See you there!