



- [About](#)
- [Research](#)
- [Library](#)
- [Publications](#)
- [Events](#)

UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Media Release

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FIRST CHICANO FEATURE MADE IN U.S. ADDED TO NATIONAL FILM REGISTRY

UCLA played key role in film's recovery and preservation

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Please, Don't Bury Me Alive! / Por Favor, No Me Entierren Vivo! (1976) directed by Efraín Gutiérrez, written by Sabino Garza, and the first Chicano-directed feature to play on the U.S. theater circuit, is among the 25 films selected this year by the Library of Congress for the National Film Registry. Selection to the registry recognizes "cultural, historic, or aesthetic significance" to America's cinematic heritage and will ensure the film's preservation for future generations.

The considerable achievements of the film might never have been known without the involvement of faculty and archivists at UCLA. The film had been presumed lost since shortly after its release. Chon A. Noriega, a cinema and media studies professor at UCLA, started searching for Gutiérrez and the film in the early 1990s. In 1996 Gutiérrez, who heard about Noriega's quest, called the professor to let him know he had recently found a 16mm print. The two would later track down and secure Gutiérrez's other films from that era, and Noriega launched the Chicano Cinema Recovery Project—a collaboration involving the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center (where Noriega is director) and the UCLA Film & Television Archive—that over the next decade would preserve these and other independent films. *Please, Don't Bury Me Alive!* premiered in its restored form in 2004 at the Film & Television Archive's UCLA Festival of Preservation.

Billed as the "first Chicano movie" due to its authorship and subject matter, *Please, Don't Bury Me Alive!* tells the story of a young Chicano coming to grips with the death of his brother in Vietnam, the dead-end job opportunities facing him in the U.S., and a racially-biased justice system. "The film offers not only a critique of dominant culture," Noriega explains, "but a nuanced view of the Chicano community itself, from its cultural resources to the main character's own human failings."

The film was shot in San Antonio over a four-year period on a \$60,000 budget and grossed over \$300,000 in its first four months, outperforming *All the President's Men* in some markets. Its success effectively broke the Mexican film industry's monopoly of the Spanish-language theater circuit in the U.S.

and set a precedent for both Chicano and Mexican independent productions aimed at the U.S. market. Adds Noriega, "The film is important as an instance of regional filmmaking, as a bicultural and bilingual narrative, and as a precedent that expanded the way films got made."

Please Don't Bury Me Alive! joins five other films in the registry made by Latino directors: *El Norte* (Gregory Nava, 1983), *El Mariachi* (Robert Rodriguez, 1993) *I Am Joaquín* (Luis Valdez, 1969), *The Revenge of Pancho Villa* (Edmundo Padilla and Félix Padilla, 1936), and *Stand and Deliver* (Ramón Menéndez, 1988). With this year's selections, there are 650 films in the registry, including Hollywood classics, documentaries, silent films, and independent and experimental motion pictures. The CSRC distributes *Please, Don't Bury Me Alive!* on DVD through its Chicano Cinema and Media Art series. The DVD includes a subtitles option and a bonus interview with the director, and is available to institutions at SubCine.com.

About the Chicano Cinema Recovery Project

In 2002 the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center and the UCLA Film & Television Archive launched the Chicano Cinema Recovery Project, a multi-year initiative to identify, preserve, and make accessible the independent productions of Chicano and Latino filmmakers. Efraín Gutiérrez's three features from the 1970s have been restored through this project: *Chicano Love Is Forever* (1977), *Please, Don't Bury Me Alive!* (1976), and *Run, Tecato, Run* (1979). The Chicano Cinema Recovery Project has received major support from The Rockefeller Foundation, The Ford Foundation, The Ahmanson Foundation, and UCMEXUS (University of California Institute for Mexico and the United States). Works that have been preserved include experimental films and videos, documentaries, and feature films.

Additional Resources

- [Interview of Efraín Gutiérrez conducted at CSRC \(2006\)](#)
- [Excerpt of *Please, Don't Bury Me Alive!* \(CSRC YouTube\)](#)
- Institutions may purchase the DVD at SubCine.com. All other inquiries, please contact support@chicano.ucla.edu
- [Library of Congress News Release](#) (Dec. 17, 2014)
- Efraín Gutiérrez's films are archived at the [UCLA Film & Television Archive](#). The filmmaker's papers are archived at [Stanford University](#)

The UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center was established in 1969, integrating multidisciplinary research projects with a library, academic press, and community partnerships. Current research areas include public health, education, economic security, media, and the arts; and recognitions include the Society of American Archivists' Diversity Award. To learn more about the CSRC, visit [our website](#), [Wikipedia page](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or [email us](#).