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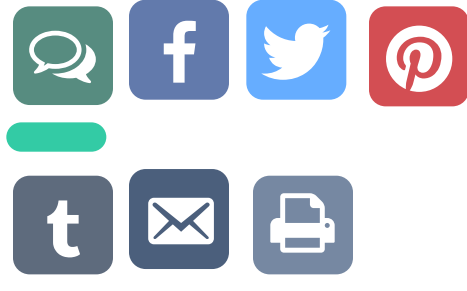
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## A Conversation with La Raza Magazine's Luis C. Garza

Melanie Romo, Assistant Features Editor  
October 7, 2020



The Latino/a Faculty and Staff Association (LFSA) at CSU Bakersfield hosted an event with guest speaker Luis C. Garza, photographer for La Raza Magazine, in honor of the 50-year anniversary of the Chicano Moratorium on Sept. 23.

Professor Jorge Moraga began the event by reflecting on relevant issues today, such as the Black Lives Matter movement and the global pandemic.

“2020 is also a year for celebration, remembrance, and critical reflection,” Moraga reminded students.

Moraga then paused to inform participants on the history of the Chicano Moratorium, describing why Mexican Americans’ protested the unjust treatment of Hispanics in the U.S. and the violent nature of the Vietnam War.

Moraga described how over 20,000 Chicanos, also known as Mexican Americans, gathered with intentions to peacefully protest the war and the discrimination against the minority community on Aug. 29, 1970; police entered the scene and the event took a tragic turn resulting in 200 people arrested, 60 wounded, and 4 killed. This became known as the Chicano Moratorium.

Much of the Chicano movement’s background derives from this period in time, from those individuals who marched and fought for their equal place in American society.

“The Chicano movement touched every major cornerstone of the American way of life: labor, education, politics, the legal system, militarism, imperialism, and so much more,” Moraga said.

CSUB president Lynette Zelezny welcomed Garza on behalf of CSUB, sharing a few statements on Hispanic Heritage month. Zelezny described the month as “a time when we pause to observe the culture, contributions, triumphs, history, and ongoing quest for justice and equity in the Latinx community.”

Billy Kelley Jr., professor of Latin American and Latino art history at CSUB, introduced Luis C. Garza to Runners. Kelley detailed Garza’s lifetime of accomplishments, including the 30,000 photograph collection archived in UCLA’s Chicano Studies Research Center. Garza also went on to become the co-curator of the La Raza exhibition at the Autry Museum, which proudly displayed the iconic images from La Raza’s newspaper and magazine.

Garza’s presentation began with a brief history of La Raza. This prompted discussion on how he eventually became involved with the magazine as one of their photographers, as well as how the newspaper became a magazine and evolved “from its humble beginnings to its current state.”

La Raza credits itself as one of the only media organizations who covered the Chicano movement and protests. Garza explained that the mainstream media did not cover the movement, which is vital when demanding social change.

“La Raza became a key photographic witness. It becomes a chronicler, an organizing tool of, by, and for the multifaceted Chicano Movement. The sparks that shed a light on our struggle are finally making us visible,” Garza said.

Discussions about iconic Hispanic leaders included Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez, civil rights activists that made great strides in securing better working conditions and a more livable pay for farmworkers.

During the movement, Garza emerged and began to leave his own mark. With his camera acting as his tool, he documented the people in the streets, capturing their persistence and determination.

“I captured what surrounds me. I captured the imagery of barrio youth, of demonstrations, of gatherings, of rallies as is shown here,” Garza explained, reflecting on the iconic images importance.

His presentation included putting images up for attendees to see, allowing viewers to appreciate the individual faces of the people who dedicated their time and efforts for the possibility of social, political, and economic change. He shares a piece of history with every one of his photos.

Images included crowds of people carrying a piece of their hearts on large signs and to friends staring right into the eyes of the camera.

The photos credit and pay respect to the people who challenged the injustices of the system; they fought against the many issues Chicanos faced and still face to this day in the US.

“It became my razon de ser,” Garza said regarding his work behind the camera. This roughly translates to “my reason to be.”

50 years later, the fight against injustice in minority communities still remains relevant today. Garza connects the Chicano Moratorium’s violent turn due to the local, state, and federal forces to today’s civil rights movements and protests that often lead to violence and death.

“The connection between then and now, past is present, is ongoing. We must understand that. Some things never change,” Garza said.

10 years after the first issue, La Raza published its last issue in 1977. Garza explained how he became the co-curator for La Raza exhibition at the Autry Museum 40 years later in 2017. The exhibition welcomed over a quarter of a million people in a one-and-a-half-year period who came to see the content of the 30,000 images displayed.

Moreover, with Garza as curator, the images came together under one cover to form the book La Raza. The book won the 2020 International Latino Book Awards in five categories, demonstrating the influence the decades old photographs have on today’s society.

After Garza’s presentation, participants had the opportunity to ask questions which were monitored by Kelley. Attendees could write questions in the chat that only the panelists could see, and then Kelley verbally asked Garza the questions.

“It was cool that he offered advice on how to navigate current issues,” Lauren Whiting, a senior sociology major, wrote to The Runner after the event.

When Garza was asked about his favorite piece of advice he has ever received, he burst out laughing at a memory of what his farther told him when he returned home to New York.

In his anecdote, he explained that he was “a bit of a flower child hippy” during this time in his life when he came back to New York.

In regard to this his father looked at him and said, “Mijo, I don’t know if you’re going to make it.”

He questioned himself with this remark and explained that some find their way in life and some don’t; he was one of those who did.

“Like Maya Angelou says, ‘Still I rise,’” Garza said as the event concluded.

Garza encouraged the community to visit and contact him through his Facebook page. “Let’s keep the conversation going,” he said.

Among the advice Garza shared, he talked to attendees about the importance of voting and taking advantage of the right to dictate the future of the country.

“[The civil rights movement] ain’t over. These elections that are coming up, have profound impact.” In reference to the civil rights movement compared to today’s contemporary movement, Garza said.

Check out the following resources for more information:

To learn more and watch the full event, visit the LFSA’s page: <https://www.csub.edu/equity-inclusion-compliance/lfsa>

Check out @CSUBProgramming’s Instagram for a full list of Hispanic Heritage Month events.

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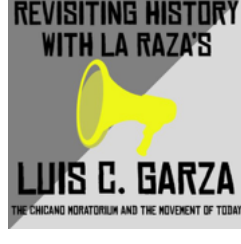
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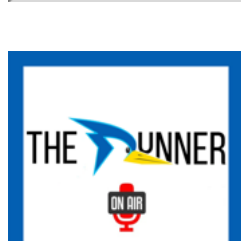
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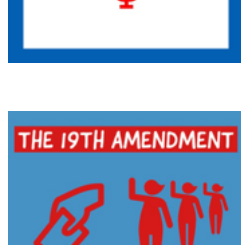
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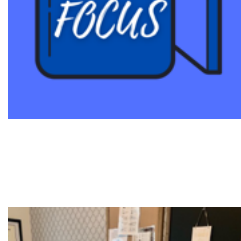
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