OF OTHER *CARIBES*: SON JAROCHO AND THE SOUNDS OF DISSENT

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Abstract

By tracing the long history of music in the Caribbean, this article will discuss the *son jarocho* as a sound of dissent: a musical, poetic and kinetic practice that relies on hundreds of years of sustained and intimate contact throughout the insular, coastal and mainland Caribbean, or the "Mexican Archipelago." By examining specific *sones*, such as "El chuchumbé" and "El presidente," I will explore the longevity and multivalence of this musical, poetic, and dance practice that has been appropriated as a sound of dissent and recuperation of rural communal values described as "convivencia" by practitioners both in Sotavento and abroad. The values of "convivencia," or "coexistence" have been deployed across cities in the U.S. (and Europe) as a counterhegemonic force that seeks to imagine—and forge—vital human connections through music and specifically the fandango. It is, conversely, the idea of the rural communal values proper to indigenous democracy, and the history of Afro-Andalusian dissent throughout the colonial period and across the diverse port cities of the Mexican archipelago that are summoned to countermand urban decay, immigration policies, and the imposition of a global Western sameness.

Keywords: Afro-Mexican music, son jarocho, fandango, Mainland Caribbean, chicano activism

Resumen

Rastreando la larga historia de la música en el Caribe, este artículo discutirá el son jarocho como un sonido de disensión: una práctica musical, poética y cinética que se basa en cientos de años de contacto sostenido e íntimo en todo el Caribe insular, costero y continental, o el "Archipiélago Mexicano". Al examinar sones específicos como "El chuchumbé" y "El presidente", exploraré la longevidad y la multivalencia de esta práctica musical, poética y de danza que se ha apropiado como un sonido de disensión y recuperación de valores comunales rurales descritos como "convivencia" de practicantes tanto en Sotavento como en el exterior. Los valores de "convivencia" o "coexistencia" se han desplegado en ciudades de Estados Unidos (y Europa) como una fuerza contrahegemónica que busca imaginar—y forjar—conexiones humanas vitales a través de la música y específicamente el fandango. Es, a la inversa, la idea de los valores comunales rurales propios de la

democracia indígena, y la historia de la disidencia afro-andaluza a lo largo del período colonial y a lo largo de las diversas ciudades portuarias del archipiélago mexicano que están convocadas para contrarrestar la decadencia urbana, las políticas migratorias, y la imposición de una igualdad occidental global.

Palabras clave: música afro-mexicana, son jarocho, fandango, caribe continental, activismo chicano

RÉSUMÉ

Traçant la longue histoire de la musique dans les Caraïbes, cet article abordera le *son jarocho* comme un son de dissidence: une pratique musicale, poétique et cinétique basée sur des centaines d'années de contacts soutenus et intimes à travers les Caraïbes insulaires, côtières et caribéennes, continental, ou «l'archipel mexicain». En examinant des sons spécifiques, tels que «El chuchumbé» et «El Presidente», j'explorerai la longévité et la polyvalence de cette pratique musicale, poétique et dansante qui a été appropriée comme un son de dissidence et de récupération des valeurs communautaires rurales qualifiées de «coexistence» des pratiquants à Sotavento et à l'étranger. Les valeurs de «coexistence» ou de «cohabitation» ont été déployées dans les villes des États-Unis (et d'Europe) comme une force contre-hégémonique qui cherche à imaginer—et à forger—des connexions humaines vitales à travers la musique et plus particulièrement le fandango. C'est, à l'inverse, l'idée de valeurs communales rurales typiques de la démocratie indigène, et l'histoire de la dissidence afro-andalouse tout au long de la période coloniale et dans les différentes villes portuaires de l'archipel mexicain qui sont appelées à contrer décomposition urbaine, politiques d'immigration et imposition d'une égalité occidentale mondiale.

Mots-clés : musique afro-mexicaine, son jarocho, fandango, Caraïbes continentales, activisme chicano

Cuando se recrea y revive el calor de los fandangos y de las celebraciones, la copla comulga y forma sobre la masa magnetizada de los cantores, de los bailadores y los cultores, una nube que toma la forma y el tamaño de un buque: es la nao de las coplas que suelta su vela al viento y conecta las islas, el litoral y la Tierra Firme.

(Antonia García de León, *El mar de los deseos*, 2002:77)

Señor presidente le vengo a avisar / mi pueblo no tiene una escuela rural / se roba el dinero por no saber leer/ pero yo si vi transas que manda usted / Me gusta el encuentro, el fandango y el son, pero no me gusta tanta corrupción.

(Los negritos 2005)

Figure 1: Map Archipelague de Mexique. Courtesy of Bernardo García Díaz.

Introduction

The city of Veracruz on the Gulf Coast of Mexico has held a strategic place as a port city in the circum-Caribbean and has long constituted—and imagined itself—as part of the greater Caribbean. Indeed, this French map from the 18th century, housed in the José Martí National Library in Havana, Cuba, depicts the Caribbean in its cartography as the *Archipelague de Mexique*—The Mexican Archipelago. Scholar Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel, in her essay, "Colonial and Mexican Archipelagoes," which explores imperialist designs, the history of imagining the Caribbean as the "Mexican archipelago," and the discursive constructedness of maps, makes a vital point for the argument to follow:

> What is important about this particular set of maps is that the designation of the archipelago is constituted visually and geopolitically as a distinct unit that identifies the imperial relationship between the metropolitan centers and the overseas possessions that are conceived

> of as a network of islands. Aside from the several maps in which the region is represented as the "Mexican sea" and the islands as the "Mexican archipelago," there are verbal references from roughly the same time period in which an archipelagic Mexico is presented as common knowledge. (2017:158-159)

Indeed, this "common knowledge" astutely underscored by Martínez-San Miguel signals the interconnectedness of this whole region, both in the imperial mind and the popular one. In the imperial mind, and as reflected in these maps, Cuba operated as a strategic port for navigational routes and an administrative center for the *situado mexicano*: a "subsidy sent by the Crown to Puerto Rico and the Philippines, which was also used to build the defensive fort system in the insular and continental Caribbean between 1587 and the nineteenth century (that included Cuba, Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, Cartagena, Venezuela, Panama, and Veracruz)" (Martínez-San Miguel 2017:162). Important to this cartographic narrative is "the centrality of New Spain viceroyalty for the financial administration of the insular territories, at the historical juncture in which the European imperial competition taking place in the region would balkanize the Mexican archipelago into the political, cultural, and linguistic divisions that we still know today in the Caribbean" (Martínez-San Miguel 2017:162). In sum, a region long theorized as fragmented and insular in many important works and treatises on Caribbean identity, for many centuries was thought of as an archipelagic space: a network connected by Spanish imperialist designs, navigational routes, defensive fort systems, economic exchange, itinerant mariners and pirates—what Antonio García de León would call the "sea of desire."

More important, at least for the story I want to tell here and that has already been told by myriad scholars before me, such as Antonia García de León, Bernardo García Díaz, Álvaro Alcántara, Gabriela Pulido, Ricardo Pérez Montfort, Rafael Figueroa, Alfredo Delgado, Antonino Vidal and Yolanda Martínez San-Miguel to name a few, is how this "sea of desire" (in part a product of empire), was the site of intense and prolonged cultural contact, and in the popular imagination the place where music, rhyme and rhythm would breathe life into each other at each port, take on a new tenor and verses, and then re-board in order to disembark at the next stop and repeat the process. The Mexican Archipelago was also constituted through the multiple *sones* that were played, sung, danced and lived in what would be called the "fandango." The "balkanization" of the different Spanish Caribbean communities and port cities into discrete political entities would see this fandango retreat into the countryside where it would acquire new sounds, songs, rhythms and rhymes and be preserved for a couple centuries—some would say almost disappear—but would never lose what García de León calls its "Afro-Indo-Andalusian" heritage. Now

this music, in its current and vibrant iteration as *son jarocho* and the *fandango sotaventino*, has been resuscitated since the early 1980s by cultural producers, musicians and scholars both from the region and outside of it, and blown into cities across the Greater Caribbean and beyond (not unlike the southerlies that blew the ships into the Port of Veracruz): a gale moving from its "original" birthplace in the Sotavento many centuries ago to reach urban metropolises as diverse as México City, Los Angeles, New York, Barcelona and now Miami, each time with a renewed and impressive force. It is in the context of sonic movement between the port cities and the rural countryside within the long history of the greater Caribbean that this article will discuss the music that is commonly referred to as "son jarocho" as a sound of dissent: a musical, poetic and kinetic practice that relies on hundreds of years of sustained and intimate contact throughout the insular, coastal and mainland Caribbean, or the "Mexican archipelago."

Relying on existing research that already considers the Sotavento Veracruzano and its cultural expressions as a seminal part of the greater Caribbean (see the superb bibliographies by Antonio García de León, Ricardo Pérez Montford, Rafael Figueroa, Alejandro de la Madrid, Robin Moore, and many others), this article will examine the lyrics of specific *sones*, such as "El chuchumbé" and "Señor presidente" in order to explore the longevity and multivalence of this musical, poetic, and dance practice that has been appropriated as a sound of dissent and recuperation of what are imagined as rural communal values described by practitioners both in the Sotavento and abroad as "convivencia," and consider, specifically, the Chicano and Latinx expression of this practice. The values of "convivencia," or "coexistence" have been deployed across cities in the U.S. (and Europe) as a counterhegemonic force that seeks to imagine—and forge—vital human connections through music and specifically the fandango. It is, conversely, the idea of the rural communal values proper to indigenous democracy—as understood by groups such as "Colectivo Altepee" in Acayucan and other young jaraneros in Mexico and the U.S., and values proper to the countryside sanctified by early advocates such as Gilberto Gutiérrez of Mono Blanco, in concert with the history of Afro-Andalusian dissent throughout the colonial period and across the diverse port cities of the Mexican Archipelago that have been summoned by Chicanx and Latinx to countermand urban decay, immigration policies, and the imposition of a global Western sameness. This essay further frames this argument within the values of sense and sensation as espoused by Francine Masiello to support the idea of fandango as a community—making experience that has led to sounding dissent by Chicano and Latinx communities, as well as urban youth across México and *jaranero* groups transnationally.

Other Caribes: Archipelagos of Sound[1]

The maritime relationships that helped to not only solidify Spanish imperial domination, but also cultivate economic and cultural exchange amongst the different port cities (Habana, Veracruz, Portobello, Cartagena, Maracaibo) were also fundamental to founding important port cities along the inland tributaries. According to scholar Bernardo García Díaz, the Sotavento, the region in southeastern Veracruz, Oaxaca and Tabasco that flows inward along the Papalaopan river (the "river of butterflies"), cannot understand itself without its inscription into the Gran Caribe, which akin to extended family, has for centuries nurtured reciprocal cultural and economic practices and is also a product of parallel colonial processes and violence (García Díaz 2016). Despite questioning the idea of the Sotavento as a unified space, Álvaro Alcántara outlines the Sotavento Veracruazano as encompassing the Tuxtlas, the Veracruz Isthmus, the plains of the Sotavento, the Totonacapan, the Huasteca region, and the sierra of Huayacocotla. Besides the Port of Veracruz, the city of Tlacotalpan (the symbolic if not "originary" heart of the *son jarocho* tradition) was an important port as it lies directly on the river Papaloapan and was a strategic shipping destination (2015). Cities such as Tlacotalpan and Alvarado in the state of Veracruz were also key players in the imperial movements across the Mexican archipelago and for centuries afterward as points of economic and cultural exchange. For example, Tlacotalpan received cacao from Venezuela, instruments and oral verse from Maracaibo, and during the ten-year war in Cuba, became one of the most important places for Cubans to purchase beef (García Díaz 2016:20). These mercantilist circuits were accompanied by musical and poetic exchanges between the Sotavento, the insular and continental ports for centuries. In *Fandango*, Antonio García de León describes the process whereby professional musicans and troubadours accompanied these routes, that then travelled inward away from the port cities to the countryside: "*Por estas redes sutiles de la actividad fandanguera se transmitía también la fama y prestancia de muchos buenos músicos y trovadores, algunos de los cuales se convertían en itinerantes, en fandangueros transhumantes, músicos profesionales que recorrían el mundo jarocho*" (García de León 2006:11). And in the last several decades, there has been renewed interest in reviving these cultural exchanges, particularly through contests in the *décima* and improvisational verse.

Alongside the fluvial and maritime relationships that make Veracruz

[1] This term, "archipelagos of sound" is borrowed from the 2012 anthology by Ifeona Fulani, *Archipelagos of Sound*, which explored the role of female artists and musicians across the insular, coastal and continental Caribbean.

part of this archipelagic network, the relationship to blackness likewise plays an important role, as blacks formed an integral part of the colonial and postcolonial cultural and economic universe. For example, in 1803 mulattos became the majority in Tlacotalpan and other towns throughout the Sotavento: there were 1,612 mulattos, 1,156 Indians, 238 Spanish, and blacks predominated in the whole Papaloapan river basin in Veracruz and parts of Oaxaca. In other towns in the state of Veracruz such as Otatitlán, mulattos constituted 68% of the population and in Cosmaloapan almost 82% (García Díaz 2016:18). However, while many Spanish Caribbean islands actively acknowledge, even celebrate their black culture despite Afro-descendants wielding little political power, in Mexico, until recently, they are forgotten or adscribed precisely to both a real and imagined Caribbean immigration. Indeed, in the cultural imaginary the port of Veracruz has always occupied a place of tropicalized fascination, a fetishized space of black otherness, that was often displaced onto the insular Caribbean because Veracruz operated not only as a gateway to other Caribbean ports, but because it was part of the greater Caribbean, as part of this archipelagic space and imagination that participated in a cultural reciprocity that exceeds the idea that a few Cuban *emigrés* brought blackness with them. Interestingly, not unlike the exoticized and racialized images of Caribbeanness that remit to earthly paradise and frenzy, Álvaro Alcántara decries similar exoticized images of the Sotavento that liken it to earthly paradise, exuberance, coastal glee, and "frenzied fiestas" (2015:21). Likewise, scholar Ricardo Pérez Montfort has performed an admirable genealogy of the creation of Mexican stock characters by urban artistic and intellectual elites in an effort to create a sort of aesthetic nationalism that would henceforth constitute the quintessence of "lo mexicano": the charro, the china and, of course, the *jarocho*. The *jarocho* was stereotyped as a mixed-race, listless, bad-mouthed and festive. He claims that such characters created fictions from which to draw and coagulate a sense of national pride and belonging despite impoverishing the richness of regional cultural expressions in regions such as Veracruz (Pérez Montfort 2007:121-122).

Thus, archipelagic thought as articulated by thinkers like Martínez-San Miguel allows us to think of the land masses as nodes and the water as connective tissue, while not relying entirely on metaphors of aquatic fluidity, but rather, on more telluric metaphors that together with the *aires* (winds) tides, sea, and inland tributaries creates this greater cultural, physical, lived but often imagined, Caribbean. Tied into the idea of archipelagos, water, and land masses, I am compelled by the idea of air as a unifying metaphor presented in the epigraph by García de León; the idea of the wind that provides life but also takes it when accumulated in excess—both that moves ships through what he calls the "sea of desire"

and "la nao de las coplas": the sounds of the Afro-Andalusian Caribbean. Indeed, *jaranero* and musician Sinhué Inzunza Padilla, founder of Jarana Beat in New York, likens *son jarocho* to the breath. He claims that for *son jarocho* to be communal the music must breathe, and akin to the expansion of the lungs through inhalation and exhalation, the "mudanza" (the moment when the singers or poets intervene, and the musicians and dancers lower the volume) in the fandango represents this respiration; it must breathe to allow others to speak, sing or tap their turn (personal communication, December 5, 2018). The *son jarocho*, and the fandango in particular, must breathe in order to create a synchronous diachrony; a moment where all can partake of the communal breath that began many centuries ago.

Beginning in the 1980s until the present moment, it is in the larger cities (Mexico City, Los Angeles, Oakland, Chicago, Paris) where these communal values originating in the local voices of the rural countryside are heralded, branding the urban fandango with a particular irony that, nonetheless, works. In this context of the urban expression, interpretation and practice of what *jaraneros* consider to be the "rural" fandango, I will appeal to the idea of "sense work" as put forth by Francine Masiello in her book, *The Senses of Democracy* (2018), which specifically argues for the primacy of the sentient body as a placeholder for the location of culture in the crossfire between local and globalizing forces:

> [W]hen the discourse on democracy is altered—when public participation is engaged or foreclosed, when the concepts of the 'people' are redefined, when we catch sight of nations in distress or hear repeated calls for war, when we feel the weight of modernity pressing upon the walls of tradition—then, indeed, we reframe the sensorium and the uses of human perceptions. The sentient body is a placeholder for a larger discussion of the effects of state practices on its people and, alternatively, *it traces the ways in which the population resists or transforms social life.* It also becomes a measure of aesthetic performance that captures the political drift. (2018:3) [Emphasis mine]

While Masiello specifically examines what she calls "sense work" in Southern Cone poetry and performance as a result of fragile democracies and the terror of dictatorship, the very same pressures that conform art in these contexts become salient, even urgent, as a result of the political and narco-terror in Mexico, the direct geopolitical pressures of U.S. xenophobia that has led to the militarization of the border, the scapegoating of the Mexican immigrant and the terror of U.S. immigration policies across the diaspora. This urgency, the need for Mexican and Mexican-American communities to "resist" or "transform" social life is precisely what is at stake in the evolution of *son jarocho* as a rural musical genre that in the early 20th century was appropriated by an

emergent Mexican state reeling from civil war, who in the 1920s and 30s rendered it a stagnant musical form by emblematizing it as a hallmark of Mexican culture (alongside many other regional cultural expressions) through the staged *ballet folclóricos.* This history of the "whitening" of *son jarocho* is nicely summarized by scholars Christian Rinaudo, Ishtar Cardona and Manuel Cuellar. To briefly summarize the vicissitudes that this genre would undergo, it is important to recall its professionalization and subsequent commercialization that began at the behest of ideologue and minister of culture José Vasconcelos. The state created a cultural pedagogy (not unlike the dictator Porfirio Díaz's staged performances in honor of the centennial independence in 1910) that mobilized public performance to generate a sense of unified nationhood and belonging. According to musician Gilberto Gutiérrez and others in the documentary film *Fandango, In Search of the White Monkey* (2006), this version of the *son* supplanted more traditional expressions to the point of almost extinguishing it entirely. Indeed, up until the late 1970s, *son jarocho* was thought to be an almost moribund musical expression, particularly as a result of this state-centered cultural nationalism that created a monolithic face and sound for regional musical expression, in the case of Veracruz, what became known pejoratively as "son blanco." Its expression was staged with men dressed in white pants and *jarocho* white hat, and women dressed in criolla white lace. The music was accelerated to a vertiginous tempo and the dances—and *sones*—homogenized. These staged productions that toured the country in search of a unified cultural nationalism for the post-revolutionary state created a strangle-hold for what musicians such as Gilberto Gutiérrez called "son de raíz" (Cardona and Rinaudo 2017:25). This performative cultural expression, coupled with technological innovation, the emergence and skyrocketing of the record industry—often recorded and promoted in the U.S.—and the imposition of seven decades of a one-party dictatorship further contributed to the retreat and preservation of the *son'*s richness and variation in the countryside in favor of this "son blanco." Thus, while early proto-*sones* in the 17th century, such as "El chuchumbé" were recorded in the cities across the vice-royalty and thus denounced to the Inquisition, when the *son jarocho* become adopted as a nationalist expression in the early 20th century, it retreated to the countryside. However, as noted by García de León, the port cities always included movement back and forth to the countryside, thus *sones* traveled along the river tributaries, disembarked, and then went inland (*monte adentro*).

> As a result of the ossification of the *son* on the national stage, beginning in the late 1970s anthropologists, musicians and cultural producers, both from Veracruz and beyond, struggled to maintain what was considered to be the rural expressions of *son jarocho* through interviews

> of elders, recordings, activism, workshops in the larger cities as well as countryside, and the creation of the now internationally-known "Encuentro de Jaraneros." This *Encuentro* proved seminal to the revitalization of the *son jarocho* in Mexico, which was followed by its uptake in California. In fact, the early promoter of *son jarocho*, Gilberto Gutiérrez and his group Mono Blanco, began traveling back and forth between California and Veracruz, imparting knowledge of the traditions, and insisting on "son de raíz" as the traditional, originary form. Chicano groups based out of northern California, such as Los Cenzontles, would then travel back with them, in what would become a cultural exchange that has only multiplied across the U.S. since the 1980s. Indeed, as early as 1993, international children's camps in Mexico were being held for the instruction of *son jarocho* for children in Mexico and from the U.S. This insistence by the early rescuers of the *son* on the rural expressions would reverberate within the Chicano communities who hosted them, and who learned directly from them, leading to a musical heritage tourism that to this day has only expanded. Cardona and Rinaudo explain that the oppositional discourse between son blanco/de raíz, rural/urban, tradition/folklore and even whiteness/browness/blackness established by the cultural agents who are considered the "generation of rescuers" would also inflect the language of the Chicanx jaraneros and vice-versa: "*[e]n el encuentro con grupos que reafirmaban una identidad heterogénea y exigían una reflexión sobre 'los orígenes del origen,' algunos jaraneros veracruzanos comenzaron a explorar las posibilidades que ofrece la identificación con la raíz afro, más visible en la hibridación cultural estadounidense que en el panorama nacionalista mexicano*". (2017:27)

Thus, the assertion Masiello makes regarding the loss of "experience," the idea of the sensorium in all its forms that crosses with the practice of everyday life, is a primordial phenomenon in the geopolitical context of Mexico and the United States—particularly, in big cities with prominent immigrant populations—many of whom have migrated from agricultural communities in Mexico. Masiello avers:

> Beyond the naysayers who lament the loss of experience in our modern times, I attend to the ways in which the sensorium puts experience back within reach […] the local expression of what might appear to be a global commonality—how to see, touch, taste, and hear—and in tracking its representation. […] Underlying this is a strong conviction that the ways in which we see or hear, touch or taste the world are driven by construction of selfhood that are formed in local contexts; social norms cross with our daily experience of pleasure and pain. (2018:7-8)

Drawing from this idea of sense work that appeals specifically to a local expression "that consolidates a particular moment and place," *son jarocho* has been transported globally from the Sotavento to a completely different time and place, for it then to acquire its own local expression

(Los Angeles, Seattle, Washington D.C., Chicago, New York, Miami, Barcelona, Berlin) (Masiello 2018:7). In this desire to recuperate experience, the senses and sensations of belonging that have proved vital towards the recuperation, revitalization, and now world-wide spread of *son jarocho*. We see, then, that the "ida y vuelta" (comings and goings) across the Atlantic and around the Caribbean basin and on the mainland, bringing five hundred years of movement, protest, but also cultural communion and even joy into sharp relief in the urban fandango in Mexico City but also across the United States and even Europe. In sum: it is in the urban fandango inspired paradoxically in the specificity of the rural sotaventino practice where food is communally supplied, where musicians and dancers of all stripes, formations, talents and classes are summoned, where private homes are rendered public, and public places become sites of intimacy, of communion—but also of dissent—and that social norms in the modern age are questioned, bridging tensions between race, gender and class, even if not always productively nor peacefully.

Afro-Andalusia and Early Afro-Mexican Dissidence in East Los Angeles

I will turn to an early musical expression of blackness which provides another key to understanding the audiotropic landscape that has both defied, and deflected, the invisibilized Afro-Mexican history. The "Chuchumbé" was one of the earliest proto-*sones* from which *son jarocho* is derived is an early example of this sound of dissent, having been banned by the Inquisition twelve separate times in the eighteenth century. Clearly, the need to re-issue the inquisitorial edict a dozen times underscores the song's popularity throughout the viceroyalty but also across social classes, as it was enjoyed not only by the popular classes of broken color, but according to the verses registered in the Inquisition Section of the National Archives of Mexico, by important upper-class whites including clerics. While its origins are unclear, it supposedly arrived to Mexico by way of Afro-Cuban sailors through the Port of Veracruz. The lyrics are not only raucous, they intentionally denounce the religious authorities as well as the practices of the colonial regime.

En la esquina está parado
un fraile de la Merced
con los abitos alzados
enceñando el chuchumbé
(Sheehy 1979:135)[2]

[2] These lyrics are taken from Daniel Sheehy's well documented doctoral

The provocative rhythm and catchy refrain of the "Chuchumbé," was "blown into the ears" ["¡El chuchumbé te he de soplar!"] of people far and wide, including a cleric from the Order of La Merced in the Port of Veracruz who picked up his habit to show his "chuchumbé." These lyrics clearly provoked fear in the state and the church; the malicious "aire" of the Chuchumbé inspired a noble person to "shake their ass," while a widow celebrated her dead spouse. Whether the ecclesiastical authorities truly hoped—or succeeded—in successfully prosecuting someone reported to dance or sing the Chuchumbé, I simply do not know as I have not read any scholarly work that cites a case prosecuting someone for singing or dancing to this music. But, "the presence of these *sones* marks a space where, through music, and specifically *son*, the politically subversive attitudes of these early Afro-Mexicans and members of the castas were manifested, carving out an aural space from where their voices would be heard" (Arce 2017:201). More importantly, underlying the music is a specific claim by the anonymous authors that they *were not the only ones listening*, and *moving*, to this music. While *son jarocho* didn't coalesce into the genre we know today until the end of the 19th century (having evolved from *tonadillas* and other *sonecitos regionales*), the circulation and subsequent delinquent status of the "Chuchumbé" is important for comprehending, and countermanding, the nationalist discourse that understands Mexican tropicality and blackness as imported from the Caribbean—as early as the 1800 we are alerted to black musical forms because of their indexation in the criminal archive. Thus, with Afro-Cuban sailors taking the blame for these proto-*sones*, we can appreciate how this trope of foreignness works itself out not only in music, for example, in the "*rumbera"* films that were produced by the dozens for decades (Arce 2017:160). By racializing the Caribbean origin of the music, blackness is eliminated from the national narrative of mestizaje, as it wasn't until 2015 when Afro-Mexicans were allowed to identify as such in an interim census, for example, as "negros," "morenos" o "afromexicanos." This resounds loudly with issues Chicanos and Mexican-Americans face, often considered inauthentic in their interpretation of Mexican musical genres and culture by Mexican nationals, orphaned from their Mexican birthright as American citizens, lest we forget that the few contributions Chicanos are credited for to Mexican culture come in the form of the Zoot Suit, or the ridiculed "Pachuco" of Mexican golden age cinema.

I would like to closely examine a strophe from the "El Chuchumbé" as one of the threads of the larger musical fabric that reveals social,

thesis, and later book, who copied them from the Inquisition Section of the National Archives of Mexico.

religious, and political criticism that this music executes by way of irony, satire and ellipsis.[3] The implication of a priest dancing publicly on an identifiable street corner seen in the previous passage constitutes an important indictment at the moment because, while it does not name the priest, the location of the Church of the Order of La Merced was well known, as were the friars who presided there. Thus, the song does not just accuse any priest, but a specific priest from the Order of La Merced who would have been easily identifiable by the authorities and the populace at the time (mid 17th century). Moreover, there is an important verse that issues an accusation and claim against another noble person, probably a woman, graced with the honorific, "Vuestra Merced" ["Your grace"]. In the strophe she has been informed that she has been assigned a particularly licentious nickname by the people: "¿Save Vmc (Vuestra Merced)/ save Vmc, que meneadora de culo / le anpuesto a Vmc?" (sic). Thus, it states, "Did Your Grace know, that the people have given you the nickname 'ass-shaker'?" To summarize: a noble recipient is informed by an anonymous first-person source that not only the speaker, but the entire community is aware of "Vuestra Merced's" lowly meanderings in the lascivious world of the "Chuchumbé." This is probably the most subversive line in the whole song (beside the strophe inveighing the friar from the Order of La Merced), because it inserts private behavior into the public sphere, divesting the subject of all dignity the honorific "Vuestra Merced" would grant. Thus the anonymous voice—the *pueblo*—exercises power by *knowing*, and *your grace* loses power by not *knowing how to control* this public knowledge, losing all authority and social standing. Indeed, the Chuchumbé's execution in public spaces, its explicit lyrics inciting and denouncing public figures through anonymous authorship, literally sings and dances its dissent and the denunciation of unjust colonial rule. Thus the "collectivity," the *knowing* public exercises its ephemeral control by way of gossip expressed through the *son* as part of the ritual conservation of memory.

In the end, the "Chuchumbé" emerges as if an infectious wind and contagious infirmity ["el chuchumbé te e de soplar" (sic)], a corporeal consciousness identified with the people of broken color, racializing sin and social delinquency (Arce 2017:188). Music, rhythm and the lyrics represent this intangible wind, this sonic movement that intoxicates, and invisibly corrupts public morality at the same time it denounces they hypocrisy of the colonial regime, and simultaneously creates explicitly

[3] The analysis of the "Chuchumbé" is largely drawn from an earlier article published with the University of Cartagena Press in Spanish, "'¡El chuchumbé te va a agarrar!': La pedagogía del son en la comunidad chicana" (Arce 2018).

black spaces through the fandango. So wherever the origin of the Chuchumbé may be—la Habana or the Port of Veracruz, or both—this music participates in the construction of an Afro-Mexican and *jarocho* identity founded at least in part to resistance to the colonial regime.

It is important to underscore the critical consciousness that is born of this mixed culture because after 1810 it would not only be minimized but almost unwittingly extirpated through the elimination of the caste system and the national project of mestizaje post-1910. We see how this discourse of invisibility operates as a sound box in the political discourse of the *jaranero* in Mexico and the Chicano activist who constitutes the name, face, and culture of Los Angeles, yet wields little political power. To wit, in its 150 years Los Angeles has only had one Chicanx mayor, compared to the city of Miami which has only had an important Latino population since the 1950s but enjoys a public face, innumerable Cuban and Latino public officials and a formidable lobby in the U.S. Congress. Scholars Christian Rinaudo and Ishtar Cardona have traced the "whitening" and subsequent "unwhitening" or" browning" [desblanqueamiento] of *son jarocho* and the subsequent role that Chicano musicians have played in the recuperation of Afro-Mexican influences in the music. In their article they highlight that ethnic identifications have been strategic. For example, early on in the Chicano movement the emphasis was on indigeneity through the recuperation of Aztlán, and now, with what some have claimed to be the over-emphasis by some jarochicanos on the Afro-Mexican root: "*Así, participan de otro tipo de crítica del proceso de blanqueamiento que, en lugar de inscribir la práctica del son de nuevo en el marco del mestizaje popular del Caribe afroandaluz, intenta definirla como herramienta de lucha social, de movilización colectiva y de resistencia contra la cultura 'blanca'*" (Cardona and Rinaudo 2017:28). By recuperating Blackness as a constitutive element, the claim is "*redefinida en primer lugar como tradicional y campesina, en reacción a su folclorización, la música de jarana se convirtió, lejos de los espacios de contención del nacionalismo mexicano, en un 'proyecto afrojarocho'*" (Cardona and Rinaudo 2017:35). However, rather than unilaterally emphasizing the Afro-Mexican component to the exclusion of all else, Chicanx have sought to reaffirm it in the same way the early Chicanx movement looked towards the Aztec civilization as a source of identification, resistance and pride vis-à-vis hegemonic white culture in the U.S. in a frame of multiplicity and difference that is part of what enriches both Mexican and U.S. culture. Martha González, *jaranera*, activist and scholar, reiterates the musical growth of the *son* by highlighting its Afro-Caribbean affinities in her experience as a Mexican-American, and likewise points to the fandango as the source of her musical consciousness. Furthermore, part of this musical and identitarian education was intimately linked to the

body—the space she occupied on the *tarima* and the sounds produced by her hands and feet: "Eventually, I adapted the style of *zapateado fandanguero*—a mix of *fandango*-rooted inflections blended with other African-derived rhythms—to the music of Quetzal […] My feet and hands started beating out an alchemy of these influences. What I learned with hands on drums I then translated to feet on wood" (2014:n.p.). Both González's *tarima* and *zapateado* shoes have now been inducted into the National Museum of American History.

The Migrant Chuchumbé

Almost three centuries later, another thread is sewn into this sonic fabric in Los Angeles California, a city that would unleash a veritable *jaranero* fervor in the Chicano community that would take off across the U.S., "contaminating" other important cities with Mexican and Latino populations, and later arriving to Europe. For almost three decades, Chicano *son* will resuscitate and sing the protest of an ethnic majority with little political voice and power. Lyrics re-written by groups such as Las Cafeteras witness the racialization and criminalization of the latinx subject who suffers police profiling and abuse. Previously a sultry rhythm that inspired lascivious dance moves, even in colonial elites, the Chuchumbé is transformed three hundred years later into a victim; jailed for being dark, poor and undocumented. An invisible, yet necessary, piece of the capitalist machinery and everyday lives of U.S. citizens who rely on them for food, care, and service. In the 2008 version by Las Cafeteras the authorities targeted are not ecclesiastical, but rather, government officials who deprive undocumented and documented latinxs of their human and political rights through harsh and prejudicial migration politics and racial profiling:

El chuchumbé fue penado por el color de su piel
Como no tenía dinero
Lo metieron en la cárcel
En rumbo hacia Arizona yo no sé que vaya a pasar,
si me ven con mi jarana, la migra me va a agarrar
Que te vaya bien o mal
El chuchumbé te va a agarrar
El chuchumbé te va a besar.
(*It's Time*, 2014)

This Chicano version of the Chuchumbé decries Arizona Act SB1070, which effectively legalized racial profiling, and points to skin color—and the "jarana"—as a cultural attribute and marker of Mexicanness that makes one vulnerable to hostilities. Subject to undue policing by inquisitorial authorities, the original Chuchumbé refrain declares

that the "Chuchumbé will get you": meaning, voluntarily or not, one will be contaminated, but also, be moved, loved, hugged, and kissed by the Chuchumbé. The Chicano version likewise points to the inevitability, but also, originary nature of Mexican culture as part of an early, formative, even if disparaged, component of U.S. culture. Akin to Afro-Mexicans who form an indelible, if invisible, originary source of what is now considered Mexican culture, Chicanos are also contributors to—and active participants in—said culture, further calling into question the utility of nationalist terms like "Mexican," particularly when referring to the arts.

Another important *son* popular in the *jarocho* repertoire is "Señor Presidente," which has provided rich critique of governmental corruption in Mexico, having likewise been powerfully mobilized by Las Cafeteras to critique U.S. government corruption and racist policing. In an explicit complaint against the Mexican state that oppresses and abuses its populace, traditional verses that circulate in the public domain, anthologized in the book by Mario Bernal Maza enunciate a clear, unapologetic complaint: "*Señor presidente le vengo a avisar / aquí hay un cacique que es un criminal / Señor presidente le vengo a gritar, señor presidente le gusta robar*" (2009:202). Another version by Los Negritos, a group from Minatitlán Veracruz, further repudiates voting corruption, particularly against the party that controlled the government for over seventy years (the PRI: Partido Institucional Revolucionario) who were infamous for suborning votes in addition to all other kinds of voter fraud: "*Señor presidente le vengo a avisar, que las votaciones se van a anular / Señor presidente, le vengo a decir / que las elecciones hay que repetir / Me gusta el encuentro, el fandango y el son, pero no me gusta tanta corrupción*" (Los Negritos 2005).[4] In another verse of this rendition by Los Negritos referenced in the epigraph, the balladeer decries the lack of education that leads to delinquency: "*Señor presidente le vengo a avisar, mi pueblo no tiene una escuela rural / se roba el dinero por no saber leer*" (Los Negritos 2005). Besides a clear attack against the frank inability to enact democracy when elections are rigged, the verses condemn the lack

[4] In an infamous election in 2006, the opposition candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador, a popular mayor of México City, challenged the dominant party as a member of the PRD (Partido Revolucionario Democrático). In a heated race, he was reported to lose by only one percentage point to Felipe Calderón (of the PRI) due to voter fraud. López Obrador and his followers would not concede the vote, leading to months of protest in México City. In the summer of 2018, twelve years later, López Obrador finally won the presidency in what many consider to be an historic landslide popular vote through a new opposition party called "Morena." The only other party to successfully challenge the stranglehold of the PRI was the neoliberal right-wing party, the PAN, with Vicente Fox at the head in 2000.

of equal access to education, resulting in more government corruption and delinquency as a product of dire need. Moreover, we also witness the important place held by the cultural and musical encounters, such as the Encuentro Jaranero, but also simply the fandango as a community party and communal practice ("Me gusta el encuentro, el fandango y el son"). Thus, these gatherings, parties and fandangos catalyzed by the practice of *son jarocho* are deployed as positive signifiers that bring people together. In an even more trenchant and poignant attack on state violence, the balladeers inveigh against the police brutality that operates at the behest of the political parties and the narco-state: "*Señor presidente me vengo a quejar / que su policía me vino a golpear / esta policía me fue a amenazar / que si algo decía que me iba matar*" (Los Negritos 2005). Indeed, this song has been adapted to decry all sorts of injuries. Legendary Mexican musician, Andrés Vega authored a verse that can be heard on the 2006 recording by Mono Blanco where he complains about a horse being stolen, which apparently did occur.[5] In new *décimas* written to the son "El zapateado," Los Negritos actually used the *son* to recite verses that recounted all of Mexican history, and renamed it "La cuarta transformación" in honor of the landslide victory Lopez Obrador's new party, Morena, who defeated the PRI (the first left-leaning party to ever defeat the PRI). In this new version of the *son*, Los Negritos recalled the length of Mexican history beginning with the Aztec resistance, the War of Independence, the Mexican Revolution, and what they consider to be the "Fourth Transformation" with the election of Andrés López Obrador and a new opposition party, Morena: "*Y si cualquier funcionario / insiste en la corrupción / será un delito: a prisión / sea del Prián o de Morena / ¡Señores se pone nueva / la cuarta transformación!*" (La cuarta transformación, March 18, 2019).[6] This is important, because, it is not just Chicanx practitioners who have been "appropriating" the *son jarocho* as a political force, but Mexican poets have always used improvisational poetry as a political and social outcry.

In their version of "Señor presidente" almost a decade later, Las Cafeteras also criticize unequal access to education in the U.S. as a serious social ill. The version I listened to was recorded *in situ* with a participatory audience at the Sanctuary for the Independent Media in Troy, New York on October 5, 2014: "Señor presidente I'm trying to be cool, but if you keep raising tuition, I can't go to school!" ("El presidente" 2014). Later on in their performance at the Sanctuary for

[5] This version can be heard in the 2006 album, *Al primer canto del gallo* by Ediciones Pentagrama.

[6] This recording is available online: <https://www.desdelaizquierda.mx/2019/03/28/grupo-los-negritos-son-jarocho-la-cuarta-transformacion/>.

Independent Media, they criticize U.S. immigration policies as unjust and violating human rights and decency (as they did in their versions of "El Chuchumbé" and "La bamba rebelde"): "Mr. President don't even play, you have to reform immigration today, so that hard-working people can stay!"(2014). But their rendition turns scathing when *son jarocho* becomes the vehicle for condemning the racial politics that since the Civil War render black American personhood as criminal, thus uniting two discrete racial, linguistic and ethnic groups—African-Americans and Mexican-Americans—as victims of U.S. hegemony spanning centuries. Their powerful rendition recognizes the discriminatory practices effected in the public sphere through punitive policing and the judiciary that criminalize black (and brown) bodies, literally, to death: "*Señor Presidente le pido por qué / matan al moreno / con piel de café*" (Las Cafeteras 2017). In the call and response style traditional to *son jarocho*, where multiple singers participate and pick up where the last left off, another musician, Hector Flores, intervenes: "Sr. Presidente, what's with all the hesitation, another black boy was killed that looks just like you, and where's the investigation?" (The Sanctuary for Independent Media in Troy NY, 2014). Clearly, even the election of the first African-American President in U.S. history is not enough to prevent institutionalized violence against black and brown bodies. In this recorded concert, they circulated the room and asked members to state what they would do "if they were president," thus breaking down the wall between artist and audience. The rhyme and meter change as a result of the English, but the interlude is completely acceptable in *son jarocho* which welcomes improvisational declamations.

In a concert held in Miami (a notoriously conservative latino city) on February 24, 2018, the group sang this song and included a long interlude whereby musician Hector Flores enumerated all the black men and women who have been killed through mob or state-sponsored violence, starting with Emit Till (the young boy mutilated and killed by a white mob in 1955), moving to Sandra Bland and ending with countless others in a litany of names that seemed to have no beginning or end. This interlude was uttered like a eulogy, almost a prayer invoking the dead bodies of black men and women who, in turn, responded to their deaths phantasmatically in Flores's voice with the refrain: "I wasn't doing no wrong" (Miami Dade Cultural Arts Center, 2018). This powerful accusation, spoken as a lamentation—a mourning ritual but also cry against injustice—issued in the musical language of the *son jarocho*, is perfectly consonant with the conventions of this traditional Mexican folk genre. In fact, this ritual mourning and lamentation elicited an incredibly emotional response from a mixed audience that included Chicanxs, Mexican nationals (documented and undocumented) Afro-Caribbeans, African

Americans, and diverse people from all over the Caribbean, in addition to Anglo-Americans. Alas, 300 years after the Chuchumbé, we continue to see the *son* operate in all poetic forms and in diverse discourses—from the lament of a forlorn lover to a political outcry.

Rubén Hernández León makes this same argument regarding the deployment of *son jarocho* as a counterhegemonic discourse in the Chicano/Latinx community in his article based on ten years of research as both an academic and *jaranero*:

> I argue that Mexican-American activists have reworked this regional music genre turning it into a sound for the immigrant rights movement. I specify two dimensions of this process: 1) the reinterpretation of the fandango jarocho as the aesthetic enactment of community, and 2) the repurposing of son jarocho as a tool for community organizing to demand rights for immigrants and narrate their struggles in newly written lyrics. (Hernández León 2018:2)

Indeed, verses by Chicano *soneros* have become so important that they have now entered into the *son jarocho* and fandango repertoire by virtue of secondary orality, even in Mexico. When playing or performing "La bamba" (originally covered by Chicano Richie Valens in the U.S.), it is common to hear the refrains popularized by Las Cafeteras in their now famous rendition from the grammy-nominated album, *It's Time*. The band replaced the famous refrain, "*yo no soy marinero*" with "*yo no soy de la migra ni lo seré, ni lo seré, ni lo seré*." This line refers to the INS immigration officials that regularly participate in raids on undocumented

Figure 2: Concert by Las Cafeteras with audience, Miami Dade Auditorium, February 2018. Photo taken by Mónica Sánchez.

peoples. "La migra" is the informal, somewhat derogatory term applied by Mexicans and Chicanos to this U.S. agency. Another important verse regularly sung in fandangos in their rendition is, "*yo no creo en fronteras, yo cruzaré, yo cruzaré, yo cruzaré*," which has become an anthem of the group and printed on t-shirts sold at concerts. Indeed, at the concert in Miami, Las Cafeteras ended their concert by inviting a group of local "jaraneros" named Ameyal on stage to join them in their rendition of "La bamba rebelde"—turning the formal concert into a spontaneous fandango.

Beside examples from Grammy-award and commercially successful groups like Las Cafeteras, *son jarocho* has for years been associated with other movements, such as the Coalition of Immokolee Workers in central Florida, who in the words of Melissa Gouge "constructed a human rights organization with a more emancipatory vision for human rights than those of most NGOs, with an emphasis on collective economic and social rights" (2016:865). Like other scholars I have cited earlier, she insists that "[c]ulture cannot be discounted as unimportant for social movements; the work of the CIW illustrates this. Today's theory considers culture and emotions but still falls short when examining the role of emotions like joy emerging from play and humor" (Gouge 2016:862). The CIW were introduced to *son jarocho* by sharing office space at "El Centro Cultural de México" in Los Angeles in the early days of the movement (862). Through the play and humor in *son jarocho* and other art forms, the workers in Immokalee have achieved great successes. Indeed, she claims that "[a]t virtually every CIW gathering there are the *jaraneros* playing *son jarocho*," including the 170-mile march from Immokalee to the Publix headquarters in Lakeland, Florida (Gouge 2016:868). Video footage on Youtube from 2013 showcases a fandango outdoors during the annual march Son Solidario in Immokalee.

Conclusion: The Fandango and the Sounds of Dissent

Figure 3: Public fandango, "Creando Comunidad y Uniendo Corazones: Fandango Jarocho." Lamont Park, Washington D.C. August 2018. Photograph taken by Liz Mangas.

The fandango became a like passageway to another world for us, beyond California, and even Mexico, where maybe we could find a deeper connection and different meaning.

(Eugene Rodríguez, *Los Cenzontles*, 2006)

Tenemos un vaso de bebida en un huapango que se comparte entre todos.

(Colectivo Altepee, Acayucan Veracruz, 2013)

The words of Francine Masiello from the book *The Senses of Democracy* can once again be summoned to frame part of this discussion regarding the salience—and power—of the fandango because the scholar associates the power invoked by the affective state to "a material connection to the real, and here the senses once again come in to claim a role" (2018:8). Sensation, in all of its modalities, she claims, "gives form to the affective state; it is both a precursor and a material follow-up to the work of emotion; it is the psychological entry point for a deployment of power" (2018:8). In this conclusion, I address the importance of the fandango as communal practice and political praxis, keeping in mind these notions put forth by Masiello regarding the aesthetic. The

fandango is not just a performance, or party, but precisely a material and sensorial connection invoked by the *smell* of the party, the *sounds* of the music and background chatter, of musicians and audience taking turns to intervene, of the *feel* of the wooden *tarima* underneath the feet of the dancers, of the bodies pushed together in a plaza, patio, or street corner, of the *taste* of a tamale from either family member or a street vendor, and the *sight* of this reunion—this visual, sonic, kinetic space—uniting musicians, poets, dancers, participants, food-sellers, children, elders around the wooden stage, dressed in either ripped jeans, *fandanguera* skirt and shoes, or traditional guayabera and *paliacate*, with a jarana (or child) hanging from their back.

One critical component of the Afro-Mexican universe documented in the complaints issued by the Inquisitorial authorities in the seventeenth century regarding the affront to decency elicited by the "Chuchumbé," is defined by precisely the physical space that is infiltrated, the sounds that travel across a private patio or street corner, and that paradoxically generates community: the "fandango." The fandango, practiced throughout the centuries across the Mexican Archipelago, is today understood as a communal expression of the *son* where musicians, dancers and poets gather around a wooden plank or platform. Ricardo Pérez Montfort helps us understand the history of the fandango through an exploration of its etymological origin:

> *Si se busca en el contenido y la forma de la palabra fandango y se abreva en algunas de sus apariciones más lejanas en el tiempo, una disputada paternidad entre el latín fidicinare que quiere decir "tocar la lira" y la voz mandinga fanda acompañada del despectivo ango, equivalente a "fiesta que se come," aparece con cierta claridad. Hay quien se inclina a favor de este segundo origen etimológico africano tomando en cuenta que ya en referencias anteriores, específicamente de los siglos XVII y XVIII, se menciona que el fandango es "baile introducido en España por los que han estado en el reino de las Indias*." (2015:375)

According to this definition with both Spanish and African origins, a fandango is a communal party "that consumes itself" and that was introduced *into* Spain *from* colonies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by way of people traveling back from the "Indies." It is a celebratory custom that did not "originate" in Spain and travels West, but rather, was a product precisely of the *ida y vuelta*, the comings and goings of not just mariners but all those who were moving back and forth between the cultural heart of the Empire (Andalusia and the Spanish Ports) and its multiple hearts in the colonies. Moreover, it is a festivity that has its counterpart across the archipelagic Caribbean, even when, as commented by Pérez Montfort, different names would point in diverse directions: what in Mexico was described as *fandango*, in Cuba

was understood as *zapateo*, in Venezuela the *joropo* and in Panama the *mejorana* (2015:378). Pérez Montfort claims that these social phenomena that belong(ed) to the popular classes across the archipelago and on the continent, gave way to a shared cultural complex that continues to the present day: "*En otras palabras: el fandango, el zapateo, el joropo, la mejorana, la fiesta de tarima o como quiera llamársele, dio lugar a la paradoja de un complejo cultural que sigue circulando entre nosotros y que nos hace a los que habitamos esta zona, como al común de los seres humanos, diferentes pero iguales*" (2015:381).

The fandango has its mutually understood and accepted protocol—even hierarchy—but nonetheless, is designed to stimulate community engagement as a form of musical participatory democracy. The *jarana* (a derivation of the baroque lute), at least in today's rendition, is the premier instrument, and the ability to play only 3 or 4 chords allows you to participate in dozens of *sones*. The *tarima*—the wooden plank on which the *zapateado* takes place—provides percussive rhythms and counter-rhythms, invites all to participate and while encouraging complex rhythms, discourages individuality. Rather, it invites young and old to engage in a rhythmic call on response between pairs on the wooden space. The *décima*, but also *coplas* [couplets], *cuartetas* [quartets] and *sextetas* [sextets] (diverse poetic forms that are usually octosyllabic but based on medieval and baroque peninsular balladry) is an integral part of the music, with improvisational competition between poets being one of the most important elements in the fandango. All contribute to the festivities with food, manpower and good will. The event could be just about anything: a wedding, birthday, baptism, funeral, or Saint's Day.

The original "Encuentro de Jaraneros" was initiated in the early 1980s in Tlacotalpan, Veracruz by the band Mono Blanco with the intention of revitalizing the *son jarocho* as well as continuing the tradition of the *fandango* during the Festival de la Candelaria.[7] This important festival has incited what since 1981 is being called a "movimiento jaranero," mobilizing regional and international musicians, and has become the site of "heritage" tourism for many Chicanos who play *son jarocho* and practitioners abroad. As stated by Hernández León, "[w]ithout completely displacing the old style of son jarocho, the jaranero movement successfully established its own national and international networks of cooperation and artistic production (Becker 1974), enjoying widespread acceptance among audiences and institutions" (2018:5). Despite its original intent to breathe life into a dying genre, today the Encuentro is vibrant and has taken on a transnational tenor. Musicians

[7] This festival in honor of the Virgin of the Candelaria occurs all over Latin America and is generally celebrated the first fortnight in February.

from all over the world gather in Tlacotalpan (chosen by the original organizers because of its strategic location on the Papaloapan river and gorgeous architecture recognized by the UNESCO as a world-heritage site) to meet every year.

Indeed, the *jaranero* movement has exceeded the confines of the Sotavento, Veracruz, having flown to Los Ángeles California, where the *Jarochicano* and Mexican community has continued the tradition of the *fandangos* since 2000, hosting their own "Encuentro Jaranero" featuring local Californian musicians in the symbolic heart of the Mexican-American community, and since then *encuentros* have spread to Seattle, New York, Chicago, Washington D.C., Albuquerque, and even Miami, not to mention important cities in Europe. Steven Loza, in his work on early Chicano groups such as Los Lobos, calls their recuperation of Mexican music "an amalgam of invention and tradition," concluding that:

> [t]he musical style created by Los Lobos and other Chicano performers from East Los Angeles in the early 1970s can be theorized as a series of interpenetrated layers of ideologically charged sonic elements which were consciously fused to form a particular musical style… A large part of the groups desire to appropriate folkloric jarocho genres into their repertory based on an urge not only to preserve such music, but to *promote it as a viable art form in an urban and, in many respects, a culturally hostile environment*. (1985:186-187) [Emphasis mine]

Indeed, lead singer César Rosas from Los Lobos confirms this when he discusses his personal experience re-discovering Mexican music in an interview with Loza:

> It was a collective kind of experience that we had. […] So what happened was that we all went back to our houses, to our mothers' records, looking into all that stuff […] a group of East LA kids who enhances this Mexican music because we felt that it was something that was really important at the time… important for our peers, important for our culture, important for the community, and to awaken a lot of people and say, "'[l]ook-it, man, Mexican music is a beautiful thing, and you shouldn't be ashamed of it. (1985: 317)

Moreover, another Los Lobos member, David Hidalgo, describes their first gig at the American Legion in Florence, California, as a "tamalada and we only knew about five songs, and we kept playing them over and over again. […] But we got all these folks up and everybody was dancing. It was like 'What is this?' I never had that feeling before" (1985:189). Not unlike the rural fandangos, these "tamaladas" in Los Angeles were improvised parties rented out by local Mexicans, to enjoy music and community. The music played by Los Lobos at this and other "tamaladas" forged a sense of community rescued from the original recordings of *son jarocho* musicians like Orquesta Tlalixcoyan or Lino

Chaves—considered despectively by the activists of the moviemiento jaranero as "son blanco" because of the acceleration of the recordings that were designed to suit exoticist desire and urban audiences.

Nonetheless, it is important to consider that even before the "movimiento jaranero" took root in Los Angeles there were Chicano groups utilizing *son jarocho* (among other genres) as the voice of *latinidad* in the city. Scholar Rafael Figueroa has completed research with regard to even earlier musical interpretations of *son jarocho* in California, unearthing Chicano groups such as the "Mexican Players of Padua Hills" who in May of 1936 put on a Spanish-language play titled *El sol de Alvarado* (Alvarado is an important port city in the Sotavento), followed shortly thereafter by another play called *The Professor Visits Veracruz*. He also highlights a group called Conjunto Papaloapan singing *son jarocho* as early as the middle of the 1950s in Los Angeles, and of course, Chicano Ritchie Valens' 1958 rendition of "La bamba," for which he became famous (Figueroa 2014:59). So while the *movimiento jaranero* from the early 1980s out of Mexico City and other regional centers certainly provided the momentum for the vitality of the movement that would later set sail in Los Angeles in the late 1990s until the present, there was already a sonic stage set with these early theater groups and bands, as shown by Figueroa's research. This is important because it provides a transversal record of how music both in Veracruz, Mexico and in Los Angeles, specifically *son jarocho*, has held a special place as a source of cultural affirmation and later protest at different moments in the historical record—*son jarocho* did not just emerge revitalized in the Sotavento by urban, schooled musicians from the Mexican capital interviewing the elders in the early 1980s, and then travel to California a decade later. That is one part of the story, yes, but there is already a record of *son jarocho* Los Angeles dating back to the mid 1930s.

And today, in a transnational collaboration, for the last twenty years *jaraneros* from Veracruz have been participating in the *encuentros*, workshops and shows in Los Angeles and in cities across the U.S., including those hosted in Europe. The *encuentros*, but more important the recuperation of the fandango, or public/community space that was a by-product of rise of these encounters, has been an integral component of the Chicano praxis—as it used to be for rural folk in the countryside in Mexico, and just when Mexican scholars had believed the fandangos had all but disappeared. In his fieldwork in Los Angeles, Hernández-León has specifically found that the fandango has become part and parcel of Chicanx political praxis stating: "[n]ot surprisingly, many of my respondents asserted that participating in fandangos provided them with a sense of community that extended, as a 1.5 generation woman wrote, 'to social justice organizations committed to educational, immigration, and urban

planning issues'" (Hernández León 2018:14). As witnessed in the lyrics presented in the previous section, *son jarocho* has provided the vehicle for dissent, for questioning hegemony and a source of ethnic pride: "In the context of the Chicana/o civil rights movement, Mexican-Americans embraced son jarocho as musical genre of ethnic affirmation and social justice" (2018:6). Indeed, "[w]ith the fandango as a template for community building and participation, Chicana/o activists have repurposed son jarocho as a resource to organize immigrant communities" (2018:14). What started in Tlacotalpan with the Encuentro Jaranero in 1981 as a way to re-vindicate and resuscitate the fandango tradition, has turned into a political pedagogy of cultural redemption and civil rights in the 21st century. Seconding the research by Hernández-León, Alexia Balcomb, in her ethnographic fieldwork on this movement, states that LA-based

> jaraneros emphasize the creation of community determined by social rather than commercial values and encourage consensus building and equal participation. Members of the jaranero group use participatory son jarocho and the fandango performance practice to challenge the norms of capitalist society and provide alternative ways of interacting through music [and have] applied son jarocho to the Chicano movement. (Balcomb 2012:108)

Additionally, these practitioners seek to reclaim and reposition traditional Mexican culture as proper to Chicano culture as well; independently of competence in Spanish or personal knowledge of the homeland. On the other hand, the youth in the Sotavento, represented by the Colectivo Altepee, from Acayucan Veracruz, enunciate precisely the rural origins and communal values of the *son*—they even repudiate the term "jarocho" and prefer to call it "música de cuerdas." They also emphasize the fandango practice as an inheritance of indigenous participatory democracy. In the documentary *Hoy, Ayer y Mañana, música tradicional de cuerda*, the leaders of the collective declare that: "*El contexto (de la tierra, de la agricultura) creó esta música, no al revés […] te genera una consciencia, que representa ciertos valores, como la comunalidad, la sencillez, humildad, de compartir […] No hay individualismo, cuando siembras un árbol, piensas que alguien más va a disfrutar de la sombra o la fruta*" (mins. 6:50). Furthermore, there is a strong ideological component that espouses the "valores of convivencia"—"co-existence, co-habitation"—the values of participatory democracy and consensus-building that is also espoused by many Chicano groups throughout the U.S. and beyond. Mexicans and Veracruzanos in Mexico and Jarochicanx in the U.S. have revived the *son jarocho* as Afro-Indo-Andalusian Mexican musical heritage, and in the case of some Jarochicanxs, an alternative political discourse. It is important to see the divergent places, modes and ways in which this movement has developed in rural locales such as

Acayucan (in the heart of the Sotavento) compared to urban behemoths such as Mexico City, Los Angeles, and Miami, highlighting alternative, competing but ultimately consonant values related to democracy, and protesting neo-liberal consumerism and individualism. As stated by Cardona and Rinaudo, "[*a*]*sí, participan de otro tipo de crítica del proceso de blanqueamiento que, en lugar de inscribir la práctica del son de nuevo en el marco del mestizaje popular del Caribe afroandaluz, intenta definirla como herramienta de lucha social, de movilización colectiva y de resistencia contra la cultura 'blanca'*" (2017:28).

No longer centered in the Bay Area, Los Angeles or even California, there are vibrant *jaranero* groups all over the U.S.: Chicago, D.C., New York and now in Miami, a city considered part of the Gran Caribe and practically "terra firma" of Latin America but with a completely invisible Mexican and Central American community that is nonetheless vital to Florida's important agricultural industry. In this cosmopolitan city with strong Caribbean populations, the infectious *aires* of the Chuchumbé have landed and a local *jaranero* group has emerged since 2015. Calling themselves Ameyal (spring water), they began to create a sense of community and *convivencia* in just a few years, growing from a mother, father and daughter to a group of over sixty members. Their organization, headed by a couple from Martínez de la Torre, Veracruz (a town outside of the Sotavento with no real tradition of *son jarocho*), includes many Central Americans and a half dozen natives of Veracruz (none of whom played, or even listened to *son jarocho* before joining the group in Miami) alongside people from all walks of life: children, adults, documented, undocumented, house-cleaners, bakers, professors, teachers, politicians, street-vendors and gardeners. Hosting their own "encuentro jaranero" in March of 2018, this week-long encounter included music, dance and voice workshops for children and adults, storytelling, a public lecture at the Mexican consulate by scholar Rafael Figueroa, film screening by a Cancun-based musician and filmmaker Camilo Nu about the African roots of *son jarocho*, and live performances by all culminating, of course, in a fandango. More important, this *encuentro* was buttressed by the mentorship and collaboration of the more seasoned and established *jaraneros* from Chicago, the group Ida y Vuelta, whose founder began in Los Angeles before moving to Chicago. Ida y Vuelta offered free workshops for the Miami group in particular as well as for the general public. Ameyal founders personally housed, or found housing for all the musicians, scholars and filmmakers and together this encounter provided a public face—for the first time—of *son jarocho* and the Mexican community in Miami.

These performances were filmed and posted on public media, subsequently calling the attention of the Peruvian-born *jaranero* Alfredo

Figure 4: Fandango organized by Son la Lucha in Lamont Park, Washinton D.C., August 2018. Photograph taken by Liz Mangas.

Castro of Son la Lucha, based out of Washington D.C. since 2009, who invited the Miami group to participate. In August of the same year, Son la Lucha organized a weekend of events, "Creando Comunidad y Uniendo Corazones: Fandango Jarocho" in a public space in a traditional latinx neighborhood: Lamont Park. As was the case with the encounter in Miami, the D.C.-based group housed all the people who participated in any way they could. The public library was occupied for a *jarana* and *zapateado* workshop with master musician Zenen Zeferino from Veracruz, and this was followed with a public performance by Ameyal of a children's puppet play, Balajú. The play (authored by Mario Maza and inspired by the songs of *son jarocho*) was free to the public and anyone who wished to watch and was subsequently followed by a public fandango in the park led by the master Zeferino. Jaraneros from New York and Pennsylvania also joined in the encounter, in addition to the Miami contingent. Although some members of the Miami-based group are undocumented, they took the risk to participate in this event that sought to provide a public face and a message of solidarity and love for immigrants and the latinx community in general directly in the belly of the beast: Washington D.C. These two encounters, and many more events such as these over the last few decades, is proof that the latinxs in the U.S. have been cultivating a circuit of *jaraneros* that only continues to grow: united by the love of the music but also by the solidarity it creates in even the most hostile environments. What holds these encounters together, of course, is the *son jarocho* as a musical and collective practice alongside

the "valores de convivencia" found in the fandango. This "ventarrón de protesta" has reached diverse cities across the Mexican Archipelago and has firmly blown into multiple cities in the United States. And it appears to only be getting stronger.

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