One Fire, Two Songs: Óscar Chávez and El Tri Sing about San Juanico, 1984

Anna Rose Alexander

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One Fire, Two Songs: Óscar Chávez and El Tri Sing about San Juanico, 1984

Anna Rose Alexander

California State University, East Bay

Abstract

This article examines two musical chronicles of the 1984 fire and explosion at the San Juanico Pemex facility outside of Mexico City. The explosion killed between 500 and 700 people, but has been largely overshadowed, in both popular memory and scholarly works, by the Mexico City earthquake of 1985. Folk singer, Óscar Chávez, and rock band, El Tri, used corrido-style songs to revive the memory of the fire and make it part of the collective memory of the city. Despite government officials actively trying to repress the memory of the fire, Chávez and El Tri forced Mexican civil society to reckon with the tragedy by making the experiences of marginalized groups highly relatable to a population still in shock from the earthquake.

Keywords: Alex Lora, Corrido; El Tri; Explosion; Fire; Mexico City; Nueva Canción; Óscar Chávez; Pemex; San Juanico.

On the morning of November 19, 1984, inhabitants of the San Juanico suburb of Mexico City awoke to the sounds of explosions. Eyewitnesses feared that an earthquake had struck the Valley of Mexico or that the Popocatépetl volcano had erupted.[1] A dangerous man-made hazard was instead the culprit. Within this lower-class neighborhood, constructed of makeshift houses with tin-roofs and corrugated cardboard, sat a petroleum storage facility, which held approximately three million gallons (11,000m^3) of liquefied petroleum gas.[2] For years San Juanico residents complained about the constant smell of gasoline, occasional fires that erupted in the factory, and dark clouds that hovered over their homes, yet Pemex (Petróleos Mexicanos), the state-run petroleum corporation, did little to quell their fears. Consequently, no one was surprised by the gas explosions that created an "artificial dawn"[3] and enveloped the suburb. Yet few suspected it would become one of the deadliest industrial disasters in world history, often compared to the Bhopal, India gas leak (1984) or the Chernobyl, Ukraine nuclear disaster (1986). That morning, one-third of Mexico's entire liquid petroleum supply exploded. 500–700 people died, and severe burns scarred another 5,000–7,000 victims.[4]

Two days after the explosion, officials ordered the area bulldozed and started to build in its place a recreational park, effectively displacing 180 families and forcing them to relocate to public housing on the other side of the city. Jokingly called "parque de los muertos," this park became a site of tension for the residents as it revealed calculated efforts by officials to

hide the memory of the tragedy behind a façade of urban beautification. One critic satirized the park-building initiative in an article titled, "Aquí no ha pasado nada," claiming the government used the park to cover up corporate negligence.[5] While officials considered the disaster relief process to have been an enormous success because of the rapid cleanup and relocation, San Juanico residents detested how the disaster was managed. The residents had presumed disaster management would more closely resemble their pre-disaster existence, and instead, their worlds were irreversibly altered when officials forcibly removed them from their homes and cut them off from deep rooted bonds of community.

Officials deliberately excluded San Juanico residents from discussions about how disaster recovery would unfold in their community, which led the victims to mobilize and form the Committee of Residents of San Juan Ixhuatepec and demand justice and inclusion in the decision-making process.[6] Through mass mobilization and the creation of alliances with middle-class groups, including the Partido Socialista Unificado de México and the Movimiento Ecologista Mexicano, their voices became louder and heard more widely. These alliances brought support, but also brought unwanted attention from the Dirección Federal de Seguridad (DFS), Mexico's equivalent of the FBI, which started to spy on the San Juanico residents immediately after the explosion. Recently declassified intelligence documents from the DFS offer researchers several thousand meticulous reports about the San Juanico protests. Agents recorded the minutes from private and public meetings, the names of people in attendance, and every piece of graffiti tagged on the walls of San Juanico streets.[7] Furthermore, DFS documents confirm that several of the leaders of the movement had been beaten, killed, or imprisoned, thus forcing the neighborhood organizations to go underground.[8] Despite protestors' efforts to keep the movement alive, it seemed that it only took a couple of weeks for the process of forgetting to set in and for capital residents to move on to the next major news story.[9]

Notable musicians refused to stand by and let officials brush this tragedy under the rug. Instead, they immortalized the tragedy through music, exposing injustices and making the tragedy relatable to Mexican civil society. If bonds of community in San Juanico had been severed after the fire, musicians tried to create new ones with broad cross-class connections of compassion. While a number of artists participated in benefit concerts for the victims in the immediate aftermath of the explosion,[10] two artists immortalized the disaster by using two of Mexico's most popular storytelling forms: the *corrido* and the chronicle. Less than one year after the explosion two protest songs about San Juanico, one from folk singer Óscar Chávez and the other from the rock band El Tri, hit airwaves and concert venues, and revived the San Juanico narrative. In his song "Praise to San Juanico," Chávez recorded a melodic corrido with a soothing flute that seemed almost incompatible with the corresponding ghastly lyrics about charred bodies and screaming victims. In contrast, rock band El Tri also recorded a corrido-style song about the explosion, yet their sound communicated a

sense of outrage with guitar riffs, long haunting pauses, and raspy vocals of frontman Alex Lora. In both cases, the songs used the corrido as chronicle.

This message about the 1984 fire particularly struck a chord with upper and middle-class residents who had mistakenly thought that something like San Juanico would never happen in their neighborhoods. When, in September 1985, an earthquake hit the capital and killed 10,000 people, no social class or neighborhood was immune. Victims of both tragedies started to make connections between the San Juanico explosion and the Mexico City earthquake. Roughly one year after the explosion, when El Tri and Óscar Chávez released their songs, San Juanico victims reclaimed hope that their struggle had not been erased from the city's collective memory.

Nueva Canción and Corrido as Chronicle

At first glance, folksinger Óscar Chávez and rock band El Tri seem radically different, but their artistic objectives were quite similar. Chávez, primarily associated with *nueva canción*, made his mark in the 1960s. Before his death in 2020 from COVID-19, he had recorded more than 100 songs, helping him amass an impressive, multi-generational following. Whereas, El Tri, formed in 1968, today remains Mexico's longest-running rock band. They dominated the Mexico's nascent rock scene and appealed to a subculture of concert-going Mexico City youth who yearned for rebellious music that interrogated local themes. Both Chávez and El Tri used their music to call out injustices in the world around them, with Chávez heralded as "the greatest national representative of the protest song"[11] and El Tri equally celebrated for their "condemnation rock" (*rock de denuncia*).[12] Their lyrics were often overt and biting. In El Tri's 1997 song "Epidemia" they blamed wealthy, multinational corporations, and politicians for Mexico's ills, calling it an "*epidemia de hijos de la chingada*" (epidemic of mother fuckers). While Chávez was not known for arousing his crowds to scream profanity, he similarly condemned specific politicians in his songs, thus immortalizing their heinous acts with a catchy melody. In both cases, the artists fit within the realm of the nueva canción, and they used the format of the corrido and chronicle to tailor their messages to Mexican audiences.

Chávez and El Tri contributed to nueva canción and nuevo canto, respectively. In Mexico nueva canción, a genre traditionally associated with folk music released in the 1960s-80s was heavily influenced by the nueva canción artists who dominated Latin America. Many of the most famous nueva canción artists came from the Southern Cone and sought refuge in Mexico during military dictatorships. Compared to the music of the artists from the southern cone, Chávez argued that Mexican musicians were "privileged," because the Mexican government would not stop artists from singing, but would present obstacles to distributing the songs. For example, major commercial radio stations refused to play his political parody songs, and instead, cultural radio stations with little reach were the only options he had to get his lyrics and melodies on the airwaves.

Chávez explained this censorship, "there is certainly pressure, and many obstacles. But honestly, in my personal case, never in a violent way."[13] His Latin American counterparts were not spared violence. Chilean artist, Víctor Jara, was perhaps the most famous of the nueva canción singers and often called the "Bob Dylan of Chile." In 1973, after a military coup shook the country, Jara was detained and tortured for several days, and finally killed, because his provocative songs questioned political norms. Often compared to America's "flower children" or called "the new romantics,"[14] nueva canción artists created music that denounced injustices in the world around them and often became censored by national governments. The songs discussed issues of poverty, democracy, human rights, feelings of alienation, and sought to call out cases of cultural appropriation of North American music, styles, and politics.[15] Chávez fit securely in nueva canción tradition with songs such as, "Se vende mi país" (My Country is For Sale), or "Salario minimo" (Minimum Wage).

In the 1980s, nueva canción started to morph into nuevo canto, which had less emphasis on folk singing and started to bridge the gap between folk and rock by incorporating electric guitar and jarring changes in melody and style. The lyrics and messages differed slightly, focusing more on personal politics, instead of traditional leftist agendas and rhetoric that had dominated the nueva canción movement.[16] Originally, leftists discredited rock music because it seemed little more than U.S. cultural imperialism, gringoization, and a symbol of consumerism.[17] However, when the popular rock genre began to take on more poignant themes, it gained credibility in the eyes of leftist protesters. El Tri's songs such as "Abuso de autoridad" (Abuse of Authority), showed that they had packaged up important social messages with which younger audiences identified.

The artists' political criticism combined with robust patriotism sought to bring communities together to fight for a better country. Both, despite being openly critical of their country's political system, exhibited deep respect for Mexico and her culture on stage—and an equally deep disgust for how the United States had influenced it. In this vein, Chávez found inspiration from ethnomusicologists and anthropologists who had been studying Mexican folklore and were trying to preserve musical patrimony, a task he took on when reinterpreting traditional songs and introducing them to a broader audience.[18] In a 1985 interview he explained how important it is to remember the past in order to understand the present:

> "From my point of view, culture is respecting the values we have that we forget more and more. I mean the roots, our indigenous past, our miscegenation, renew it or it dies...I think the imposition of the United States in our country is sad…it seems very sad that we forget our way of seeing life, our way of seeing death, our way of having fun, our way of eating[19]

For Chávez, the constant reintroduction of Mexican culture and traditions through song will help culture survive. El Tri, too, embraces all

things Mexican. Even the name El Tri, which refers to the tricolor Mexican flag, oozes a fierce sense of nationalism. Alex Lora often drapes himself in a Mexican flag while performing or inspires the audience to chant "Viva Mexico," "Viva Hidalgo," "Viva Morelos," as is common at Independence celebrations. Proclaiming in a 1995 interview that "El Tri is 100% Mexicano," Lora accused other bands of being "malinchista" for only playing cover songs from U.S. artists. Hearing "fuck gringos" is as common at El Tri concerts as is having beer spilled on your shoes.[20] These artists walked the fine line between patriotism and social criticism by arguing that the country they loved could become even better with political transparency and social inclusiveness. Perhaps that is why they both chose such nationalistic storytelling styles as the corrido and the chronicle to structure their songs.

Both artists told the story of San Juanico in a quintessentially Mexican way, through corridos. This format helped evoke emotion with straightforward language that Mexican audiences found historically and culturally familiar. The simple format that became popular in the revolutionary struggles of the early twentieth century represents oral history as much as a musical ballad.[21] The form begins with the artist briefly recounting an event, presenting the date, and setting the stage for the story. In El Tri's song "San Juanico":

> It was November 19th
> When it started to dawn
> One could hear a loud bang
> That made the earth shake
>
> *Fue el 19 de noviembre*
> *Cuando empezaba a amanecer*
> *Se escucha un fuerte estallido*
> *Que hizo la tierra estremecer*

Chávez employs the same narrative structure in his song "Praise to San Juanico":

> They burned in San Juanico
> In San Juan Ixhuatepec
> And to many other saints
> Saints of what I don't know
>
> November 19th
> There was a terrible explosion
> In the year 84
> How the heart hurts
>
> *Quemaron a San Juanico*
> *A San Juan Ixhuatepec*
> *Y a muchos otros santos*
> *A santos de no sé qué.*
>
> *19 de noviembre*
> *Fue la terrible explosión*

Del año de 84
Cómo duele el corazón.

When narrating grim stories of violence or disaster, the corrido presents an easily digestible format to help listeners make sense of unimaginable suffering. The familiar melodies and formulaic styles also put listeners at ease, thus enabling artists to sneak in criticisms of unsavory politicians or institutions, without immediately turning off their audience.[22] In Chávez's song, he specifically identifies Salvador Barragán Camacho, the general secretary of Mexican oil-workers' union, Joaquín Hernández Galicia, the head of the Mexican oil-workers' union, and Mario Ramón Beteta, the then director of Pemex, as people responsible for the explosion. In a speech months after the explosion, Beteta scolded anyone who criticized Pemex for the explosion, calling "it was a form of cannibalism for Mexicans to criticize Pemex."[23] While Beteta and other officials worked ceaselessly to shape collective memory and make the public see the San Juanico fire was an anomaly, Chávez and El Tri worked equally hard to make these men's names eternally connected to the tragedy. For example, in Chávez's song he explains:

Everything is the fault of the government
It never knows what to do.

The demons were released
Powered by Satan
Everything is the fault of La Quina[24]
And Salvador Barragán

People scream with rage
Because nobody respects them
All is the fault of Pemex
And the incompetence of Beteta

Todo es culpa del gobierno
Que nunca sabe que hacer.

Se soltaron los demonios
Azuzados por satán
Todo es culpa de la quina
Y Salvador Barragán.

La gente grita de rabia
Porque nadie la respeta
Toda la culpa es de Pemex
Y el incapaz de Beteta.

In the live recording of this song for his 1992 album *Fuera del mundo,* the only parts where the audience laughed and cheered occurred when Chávez mentioned Barragán and Beteta. Getting audiences to laugh at their politicians was a specialty of Chávez's, and he often utilized satire

and parody to chide those in power. Alejandro Madrid refers to this as "contrafacta" or "writing new politically charged, satirical lyrics reflecting current events to older tunes." [25] In *Parodías políticas,* Chávez curated five volumes of his most biting songs that critiqued the political situation and used humor as a strategy of confrontation. Humor as a narrative strategy helped Chávez incite his listeners to create social change.[26] Even though El Tri did not specifically call out politicians in their recounting of San Juanico, Alex Lora assured Mexicans in an interview that "no politician is safe"[27] from being chastised in his songs.

By conforming to the conventions of the corrido, both songs end with either a *despedida,* moral take-away, or a farewell from the protagonist and balladeer.

El Tri:

> Brothers, we must
> Give thanks to god
> For being able to live another day
> Well, none of us
> Know how, or when
> Nor where he will touch us
> You can die
> In an accident
> Or of illness
> Or maybe tonight
> You lie down
> And never wake up
>
> *Hermanos, debemos*
> *Darle gracias a Dios*
> *Por poder vivir un día más*
> *Pues nadie de nosotros*
> *Sabe cómo, ni cuándo*
> *Ni dónde nos va a tocar*
> *Puedes morir*
> *En un accidente*
> *O de una enfermedad*
> *O puede que esta noche*
> *Te acuestes*
> *Y nunca más vuelvas*
> *A despertar*
> *Puede ser que esta*
> *Noche te duermas*

Chávez:

> Oh, how sad the tragedy
> What happened in San Juanico

Is it that the devil was on the loose
Or is it that God fell asleep.

Ay que triste la tragedia
Que en San Juanico pasó
Es que el diablo andaba suelto
O es que dios se nos durmió

These two songs are prime examples of how artists use corrido as chronicle. The chronicle, or *crono,* dates back to the colonial period,[28] and mixes journalism, literature, ethnography, and folklore to document an event. The event could be anything from a battle to a natural disaster to an election. Many practitioners and observers of the modern chronicle identify the genre as one of "denunciation and democratization,"[29] where the artists consider it their social duty to tell the stories of marginalized citizens and critique those in power. While music is not always considered part of the chronicle genre, Chávez speaks like a faithful chronicler when he explains that his songs "take into account a given moment in time,"[30] but he bemoans that he does not have several lifetimes to rescue and record the memories of people from every corner of Mexico City. Similarly, in an interview with Alex Lora, a radio host noted that El Tri's records are like an encyclopedia of Mexican history, to which Lora agreed, "yes, like a newspaper."[31] Speaking even more to the idea that the El Tri acts fundamentally as a chronicler of history, Lora explained in a 2006 interview, "We don't protest with our music even though some have said it is a protest music…We don't protest because the children are on the streets begging. We just tell you the children are on the streets begging. We don't protest the politicians' stealing money. We just tell you those guys are stealing our money."[32] Specialist in music and activism, Mark Pedelty explained, "Groups like El Tri have helped fuel creative dissent for over three decades."[33] Regardless of whether or not Lora thinks he sings "protest music," their use of both the chronicle and the corrido have a powerful ability to memorialize events through song.

If Óscar Chávez and El Tri are the unofficial chroniclers of Mexican history, they saw it as their duty to keep San Juanico in the minds and hearts of Mexico City residents. Even though both songs end with a sad resignation that everyone's fate is in God's hands, having such influential artists commemorate the explosion gave San Juanico victims hope because remembering may be the most powerful way to prevent tragedy in the future.

Reviving the Memory of San Juanico through Song

Only days after the San Juanico explosion, Óscar Chávez participated in an open forum with students at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Azcapotzalco. A student asked him about Mexico's unique relationship with death, alluding to the famous words of Octavio Paz, "the Mexican…is familiar with death. [He] jokes about it, caresses it, sleeps

with it, celebrates it."[34] Chávez took this opportunity to reflect briefly on what happened in San Juanico:

> "It is very complicated to think about death, imagine death, or prevent death, or remember death…it is very difficult. Speaking about death in this moment, is terrible, with what just happened two or three days ago, hell, right near here. You ask…how does one think about death. No, it's not that fun. It's terrible…What is a fact is that, there it is, and that we approach it in some way with a sense of humor, although it seems grotesque to say it, but…the way our people react to death, I respect it very much…your question is terrible because I believe it is harder to talk about death with what just happened…it is not fun, it is terrible, it is creepy, it gives us a feeling of brutal helplessness, nothing can be done in the face of these stupidities caused by man…It is as if they had thrown us a small atomic bomb…It is truly regrettable."[35]

Chávez was struggling to draw meaning from what had happened in San Juanico. His indignation and empathy came through in his comments about how the entire city was grappling with the "brutal helplessness" of what happened. In that same forum, another student asked what he thought artists' roles should be in creating music with political or social messages. Chávez explained, "I believe that one song is not the solution, what will solve things are actions and deeds. Right now, music is a vehicle."[36] Chávez and El Tri indeed used their music as a vehicle for understanding and bringing justice. Communications professor, María del Carmen de la Peza Casares, argues that corridos operate as "a form of collective resistance against forgetting events that are relevant to a community."[37] In order to bring justice, one must first remember the tragedy, and the musicians helped revive its memory.

Whether through the soothing flute in Chávez's song or the agitating cacophony of instruments in the introduction to El Tri's version, both songs do a remarkable job of detailing the catastrophe by peering inside the San Juanico shantytown, a place where most Mexico City residents admittedly would have preferred not to go. Even though the musical styles differed dramatically, their lyrics helped connect San Juanico to the rest of the city, rather than keep it separate and un-relatable. In her study of informal cities, historian Brodwyn Fischer explains that writings about slums tend to portray them as "emblem[s] of almost every perceived social ill" and that the lurid details that captivate readers may even be called "slum pornography."[38] Such hyperbolic depictions of slums create distance between what Fischer calls the "formal" and "informal" cities, where the former possesses officially sanctioned urbanity that the latter lacks. Chávez and El Tri decisively avoid this trend when singing about San Juanico. Neither song mentions that the neighborhood had been plagued by extreme poverty, that the only water source was a river that

doubled as the main sewage outlet for the capital, or that residents had willingly built homes as close as 400 feet from the Pemex plant. Instead the artists mention the relatable things that make up the fabric of daily life. El Tri painted a picture of a normal morning, singing that "some had just left for work, others still sleeping." Rather than rehashing the bleak situation of the poor and downtrodden they, ethnomusicologist Javier Barrales Pacheco explains, "that the sole depiction of the bleak [was] not sufficient stimulus to raise consciousness or instigate action."[39] When Chávez sang of parents unable to recognize their children because they resembled "chicharron," that painful imagery can easily hit anyone with a child. The musicians humanized the experience and emphasized that a tragedy like this could happen to anyone.

Government officials, conversely, worked ceaselessly to shape collective memory and make the public see the San Juanico fire as an anomaly—as something that happened to poor shantytown dwellers who intentionally built homes in dangerous environments. Some journalists ate up this interpretation and regurgitated it to the masses. Days after the explosion, *El Universal Gráfico* published an article called, "Out of ignorance people burned trash on top of a gas pipeline,"[40] blaming the victims, and not Pemex, for the victims' fate. Similarly, in a special section of *La Jornada,* entitled "Responsibility for San Juanico," readers echoed these sentiments in letters they submitted to the editor, many of which condemned residents for choosing to live next to the dangerous facility.[41] Painting the victims as "ignorant" or unable to make wise housing choices, helped the Director of Pemex, Mario Ramón Beteta, pitch the park plan as a way to impose a physical barrier so that residents would have an impediment to rebuilding homes close to the petroleum facility. He claimed the park was a way to beautify the area and provide a buffer so that residents could no longer put themselves in physical danger.[42] All and all, government officials, Beteta, and some journalists, tried to depict the explosion as a one-time thing.

San Juanico was not an anomaly. In November 1981 there was a Pemex-related explosion in Orizaba, Veracruz; in March, 1984 many people in Tabasco died due to a Pemex gas explosion; in June, 1984, another explosion destroyed the ranchería Acachapan y Colmena in Tabasco.[43] Furthermore, detailed inspections of the San Juanico plant prior to the explosion expose Pemex's disregard for safety.[44] These accidents showed negligence on the part of Pemex and the government's inability to handle such large disasters effectively. Keeping San Juanico's story alive was not only to help the victims but also to remind Mexicans that disasters could strike at any time and it was up to the citizens to make sure their government was equipped to handle relief and aid. El Tri refused to let officials gloss over catastrophe or hide it, and in their San Juanico song, they explicitly called out the PRI for trying to erase the memory with a park:

> In our minds
> We will never forget that day

When a strong gas explosion
Made the north of the city shake

Now they want to turn it into a park
This place
Just as when a child drowns in a well
They want to plug it up

En nuestras mentes
Es día nunca se va a poder borrar
Cuando un fuerte explosión de gas
Hizo cimbrar el norte de la ciudad

Ahora quieren convertir en parque
Ese lugar
Ya que está ahogado el niño, ahora el pozo
Quieren tapar

This poignant verse reminded the middle-class youth, who followed El Tri, about the disaster, while also letting officials know that their thinly veiled disaster relief tactics had not gone unnoticed.

Given that the musicians attracted vastly different fans, their messages could resonate with audiences regardless of socio-economic, ethnic, or generational divides, thus drawing outsiders to the San Juanico cause. Chávez had similar appeal after the 1968 student massacre of Tlatelolco, when his music brought together several generations to care about the same issue. In 1985, when reflecting on that time, he explained that it was "indignation that woke everyone up" to the reality of a "fractured society," which is something "we are still suffering from today." To Chávez, what followed in 1968 was "truly magical," and he hoped to recreate it.[45] In their distinct styles, both songs made the San Juanico experience socially meaningful to Mexico City residents and reaffirmed support for the marginalized victims whose concerns had become cast aside by officials.[46] In their evaluation of rock in Latin America, Deborah Pacini Hernandez, Hector Fernández-L' Hoeste, and Eric Zolov explain that *roqueros*, like El Tri, had become "totally uninterested in participating in the construction of a master narrative of the nation as a uniform imagined community…they put into practice a more flexible and inclusive discourse – one in which they actually claimed some protagonism – that articulated the complex (if often violent) textures of *lo cotidiano* (everyday life) in urban Latin America."[47] In true chronicle fashion, Chávez and El Tri brought traditionally silenced voices and hidden stories to the forefront and forced society to reckon with alternative versions that contradicted official discourses.[48]

Conclusions

Both songs came out roughly one year after the explosion when the memory of the tragedy had begun to fade and had been overshadowed by the 1985 earthquake. Elena Poniatowksa, chronicling the earthquake,

made several comparisons to the 1984 explosion, noting, "San Juanico is absolute proof of the abandonment and orphanhood that Mexicans, always far from the hand of God, live in."[49] The songs not only revived the San Juanico narrative, but they also helped the earthquake victims connect with San Juanico victims over comparable experiences of tragedy. When Chávez and El Tri brought San Juanico to the forefront again, there was a collective realization that Mexicans had missed a learning opportunity. Many of the same problems that had afflicted the victims after the explosion, also afflicted the victims of the earthquake. To earthquake victims, the despedida of the two songs resonated deeply because the idea that "it could happen to you" was all too true. For the musicians, it seemed, merely keeping the memory of injustice alive, through corrido and chronicle, sent the strongest political message of all.

Endnotes

[1] *Última noticias,* November 19, 1984; *Excélsior,* November 21, 1984; *La Prensa,* November 21, 1984.

[2] Liquefied Petroleum Gas is generally composed of 70% propane (C_3H_8) and 30% butane (C_4H_{10}). This source of energy is used widely in homes and businesses throughout the world.

[3] *La Prensa,* November 21, 1984.

[4] "BLEVE! The Tragedy of San Juanico," *First: A Journal from Skandia International* (1985): 3.

[5] Adolfo Gilly, "Aquí no ha pasado nada," *Proceso*, December 8, 1984.

[6] *Excélsior,* November 26, 1984; Lane Simonian, *Defending the Land of the Jaguar: A History of Conservation in Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 185–186.

[7] "Explosión en San Juan Ixhuatepec (San Juanico), 19-Nov-1984," Archivo General de México, Versión Pública, Dirección Federal de Seguridad, Legajo 1–7; *Uno Más Uno,* December 17, 1984; Homero Campa and Raúl Monge, "Ayuda ínfima a los damnificados: se reprimen las protestas," *Proceso*, December 8, 1984.

[8] In December 1984, police kidnapped and arrested protest leader Marcelo Moreno, leaving him with a broken nose and fractured arm. Father Agustín Abel de la Cruz López, a priest who was sympathetic to the victims and had provided them with paint for their protest signs, was abruptly transferred to a new parish. In some curious and unsolved cases, the bodies of two other protest leaders were found beaten to death and tossed into ditches outside of San Juanico. "El párroco de San Juanico, que culpó a Pemex del estallido, a otro templo," *Proceso*, January 12, 1985; "Telesforo Morales, lider de los damnificados de Ixhuatepec, fue torturado y muerto hace 3 dias," *El Universal,* seccion A, December 13, 1984, p. 1 and 10.

[9] "Muchas se lucieron pero pocos ayudaron a San Juan Ixhuatepec," *El Universal,* December 24, 1984, p. 6.

[10] "'Benko Dixieland Band' dará una función a beneficio de los damnificados de Ixhuatepec," *El Universal,* November 24, 1984, Cultural Section,

p. 2; On December 9, 1984, there was a benefit concert for victims at the Auditorio Nacional, *La Jornada,* December 9, 1984, p. 16.
[11] "el máximo representante nacional de la canción protesta," Juan José Flores Nava, "Introducción: un mal necesario," in *Parodias políticas* (México, D.F.: El Financiero, 2006), 3.
[12] Cristina Mondragón, "Entre la denuncia y la fantasmagoría: 'San Juanico' de Alejandro Lora y 'El túnel 29' de Guillermo Briseño," en Marco Kunz, Rachel Bornet, Salvador Girbés, Michel Schultheiss, eds. *Acontecimientos históricos y su productividad cultural en el mundo hispánico* (Zweigniederlassung Zürich: Lit Verlag, 2016).
[13] Es cierto hay presiones, si hay obstáculos, muchísimos. Pero nunca en un sentido violento en mi caso personal, honestamente." Chávez, *Confrontaciones*, 18.
[14] Frederico Arana, *Roqueros y folcloroides* (México, D.F.: Editorial Joaquín Mortiz, 1988), 11.
[15] Jane Tumas-Serna, "The 'Nueva Canción' Movement and Its Mass-Mediated Performance Context, *Latin American Music Review* 13, no. 2 (1992): 139–157.
[16] Alejandro L. Madrid, "Rock and *Canto Nuevo:* Alterative Musics in Mexico," in *Music In Mexico: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 115.
[17] Javier Barrales Pacheo, "History, Identity, and the New Song Movement in Mexico City: A Study in Urban Ethnomusicology," (PhD diss., University of Calfornia, Los Angeles, 1994): 249.
[18] Barrales Pacheo, 348.
[19] Chávez, *Confrontaciones*, 17. "Mi opinión sobre la cultura es bien simple y bien dolorosa. Desde mi punto de vista, la cultura es respetar los valores que tenemos que cada vez olvidamos más. Me refiero a las raíces, nuestro pasado indígena, nuestro mestizaje, renovarse o morir…Me parece tristísima la imposición de los Estados Unidos en nuestro país… me parece tristísimo que olvidemos nuestra forma de ser, nuestra manera de ver la vida, nuestra manera de ver la muerte, nuestra manera de divertirnos, nuestra manera de comer."
[20] Alex Lora, "El Tri es el mártir del rock mexico," in *El grito del rock mexicano: hablan los roqueros,* edited by Thelma G. Durán y Fernando Barrios (México, D.F.: Ediciones del Mileno, 1995), 11.
[21] Daniel Castañeda, *El corrido mexicano: su técnica literaria y musical* (Mexico, D.F.: Editorial Surco, 1943).
[22] Juan José Flores Nava, "Introducción: un mal necesario," in *Parodias políticas* (México, D.F.: El Financiero, 2006), 5.
[23] Juan M. Vasquez, "Mexico Furor over Gas Blast Is Quickly Over," *Los Angeles Times,* January 28, 1985.
[24] Nickname for Joaquín Hernández Galicia.
[25] Alejandro L. Madrid, "Rock and *Canto Nuevo:* Alterative Musics in Mexico," in *Music In Mexico: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 112.

[26] "Soledad Lujan, "En medio de un gran circo: la ciudad de México a tráves de las crónicas musicales de Maldita Vecindad y Los Hijos del 5° Patio," (MA Thesis, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2014), 47.
[27] EFE, "Alex Lora: 'No politician is safe'," *Al Día,* April 12, 2017.
[28] While the Mexican chronicle (*crono*) dates back to the colonial period when conquistadors recorded their versions of conquest as a way to seize the narrative and shape the memory of the event, it continues to be a compelling storytelling genre today. See Carlos Monsiváis, "On Chronicle in Mexico," in *The Contemporary Mexican Chronicle: Theoretical Perspectives on the Liminal Genre,* edited by Ignacio Corona and Beth E. Jörgensen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 26.
[29] Jean Franco, "El ocaso de la vanguardia y el auge de la crítica," *Nuevo Texto Crítico* 7, no. 14–15 (1994–1995): 11–22; Ignacio Corona and Beth E. Jörgensen, "Introduction," in *The Contemporary Mexican Chronicle: Theoretical Perspectives on the Liminal Genre* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 11.
[30] Chávez, *Confrontaciones,* 13.
[31] *Alex Lora: Esclavo de Rocanrol,* directed by Luis Kelly (Mexico: Instituto Mexicano de Cinematografia, 2003).
[32] Gerald M. Gay, *Arizona Daily Start,* April 6, 2006, https://tucson.com/entertainment/music/mexico-s-el-tri-tells-it-like-it-is/article_7280c37d-a05f-5fe0-9a3f-5d99c57323bc.html
[33] Mark Pedelty, *Musical Ritual in Mexico City: From the Aztec to NAFTA* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), 266–269.
[34] Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude and Other Writings* (New York: Grove Press, 1994), 57.
[35] "Es muy complicado pensar en la muerte, imaginar la muerte, prevenir la muerte o acordarse de la muerte…es muy difícil. Hablar en este momento de muerte es terrible, porque con lo que acaba de suceder hasta hace dos días o tres, caray, aquí cerquita, dices…qué se puede pensar sobre la muerte. No, no es tan divertida. Es terrible…Lo que sí es un hecho es que ahí está y que la asumimos de alguna manera con sentido del humor, aunque parezca grotesco decirlo pero…como nuestro pueblo reacciona respect a la muerte, lo respeto muchísimo…tu pregunta es terrible porque yo creo que es más difícil opinar de la muerte con lo que acaba de pasar…divertido no es, es terrible, es espeluznante, da un sentimiento de impotencia brutal, no se puede hacer nada frente a estas estupideces que provoca el hombre…Es como si nos hubieran echado una pequena bomba atómica…Es verderamente lamentable." Chávez, *Confrontaciones*, 9.
[36] "yo creo que una canción no solucionada, lo que solucionan las cosas son los actos, los hechos. Ahora, la canción sí es un vehículo," Chávez, *Confrontaciones*, 9.
[37] María del Carmen de la Peza Casares, *El rock mexicano: un espacio en disputa* (México, D.F.: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 2013), 131.
[38] Brodwyn Fischer, "Introduction," in *Cities from Scratch: Poverty and Informality in Urban Latin America,* edited by Brodwyn Fischer, Bryan McCann, and Javier Auyero (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014): 1.

[39] Barrales Pacheco, 349.
[40] "Por ignorancia la gente quema la basura sobre un gasoducto," *El Universal Gráfico,* November 22, 1984, p. 1–7, Archivos Económicos: Explosiones, Biblioteca Miguel Lerdo de Tejada, Mexico City, Mexico.
[41] "De la responsibilidad en San Juanico," *La Jornada,* November 28, 1984, p. 10, Archivos Económicos: Explosiones, Biblioteca Miguel Lerdo de Tejada, Mexico City, Mexico.
[42] "Servirá el jardín público para hermosear la zona y como amortiguador, señala Beteta," *El Universal,* November 23, 1984, p. 17.
[43] "A un año del siniestro, la investigación de San Juanico que prometio la procuraduria no da fruto," *El Proceso,* November 9, 1985.
[44] Julia Carabias, *La Jornada,* December 2, 1984, p. 5.
[45] Chávez, *Confrontaciones*, 11–12.
[46] Deena Weinstein, "Rock Protest Songs: So Many and So Few," in *The Resisting Muse: Popular Music and Social Protest,* edited by Ian Peddie (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 15.
[47] Deborah Pacini Hernandez, Hector Fernández-L' Hoeste, and Eric Zolov, *Rockin' Las Américas: The Global Politics of Rock in Latin/o America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004): 17–18.
[48] Rossana Reguillo, "Textos fronterizos La crónica: una escritura a la intemperie," *Guaraguao,* Año 4, no. 11 (Winter 2000): 25.
[49] Elena Poniatowska, *Nothing, Nobody: The Voices of the Mexico City Earthquake* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 108.

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