



**Indie cultures, pt. 2:**

# **Chicano Cinema:**

**“Between a weapon  
and a formula”**

**RTF 308 // Kathy Cacace**



# Key concepts

**bracero program**

**detrterritorialization**

**farmworker activism**

**Chicano blowouts**

**Frito Bandito & representation**

**four elements of Chicano art**

**“between a weapon & a formula”**

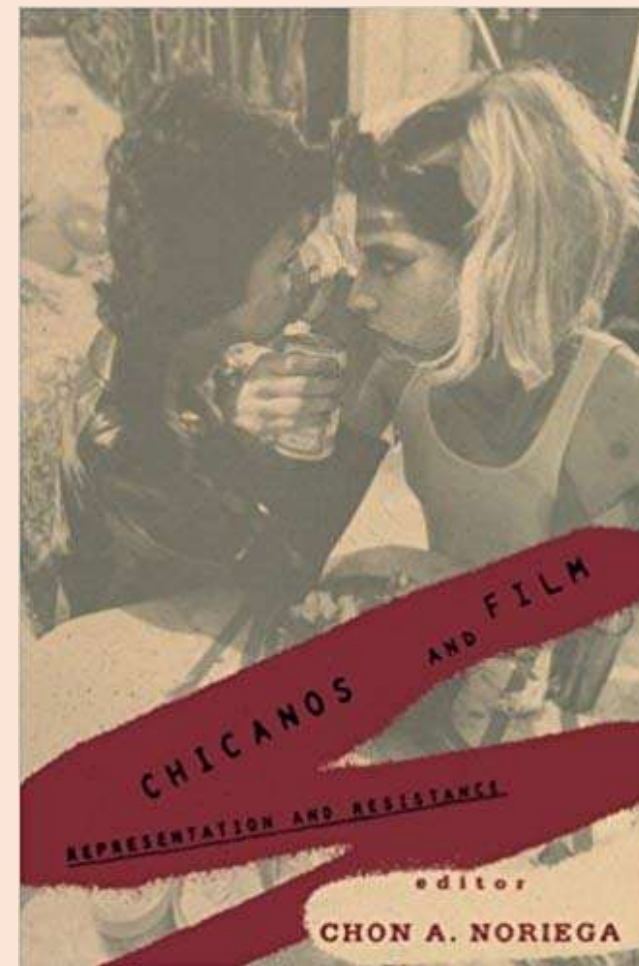
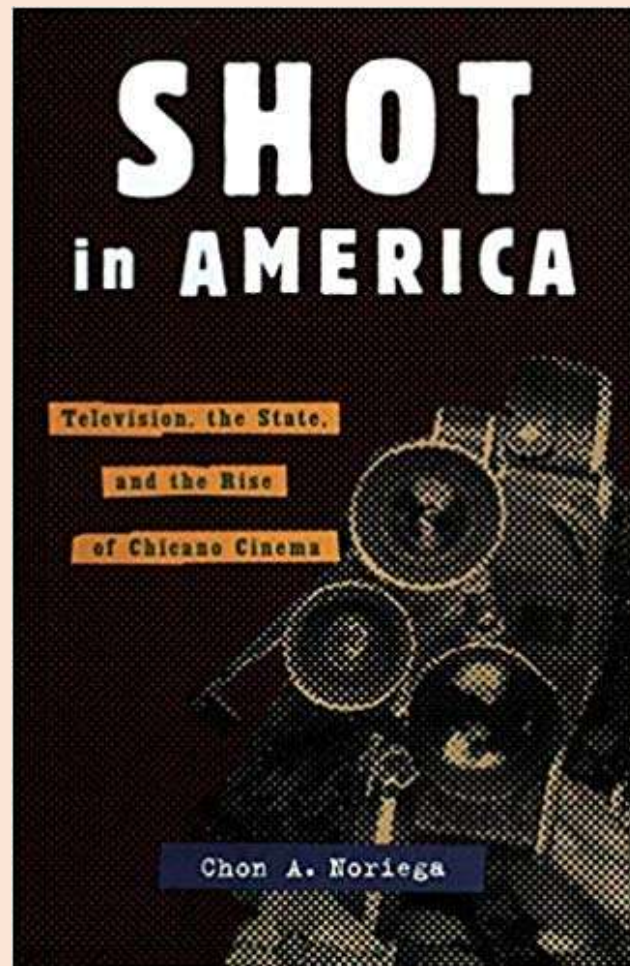
**Luis Valdez**

**Cristina Ibarra**

# **Dr. Chon A. Noriega**

**Professor of Film, Television & Digital Media  
University of California – Los Angeles**







# bracero program

(1942 to 1964)

**grew out of a series of bi-lateral agreements between Mexico and the United States that allowed millions of Mexican men to come to the United States to work on short-term, primarily agricultural labor contracts. From 1942 to 1964, 4.6 million contracts were signed, with many individuals returning several times on different contracts, making it the largest U.S. contract labor program**

# bracero program

(1942 to 1964)

**...the “bracero solution” also contributed to a broader public discourse—circulating within news and entertainment media and defining social relations—that “deterritorialized” Mexicans and Mexican Americans within the United States even as it also acknowledged the economic necessity of their presence. In other words, “Mexicans” were discursively removed from the body politic in terms of civil rights and citizenship, while their physical presence was understood and accepted on the basis of an economic rationale.**

**Chon A. Noriega**

*Shot in America*

# **detrterritorialization**

**the separation of social, cultural and political practices (such as people, objects, languages, or traditions) from a location**





**“Antonio Maese at Goodyear farm”  
(Bracero Archive, [braceroarchive.org](http://braceroarchive.org))**



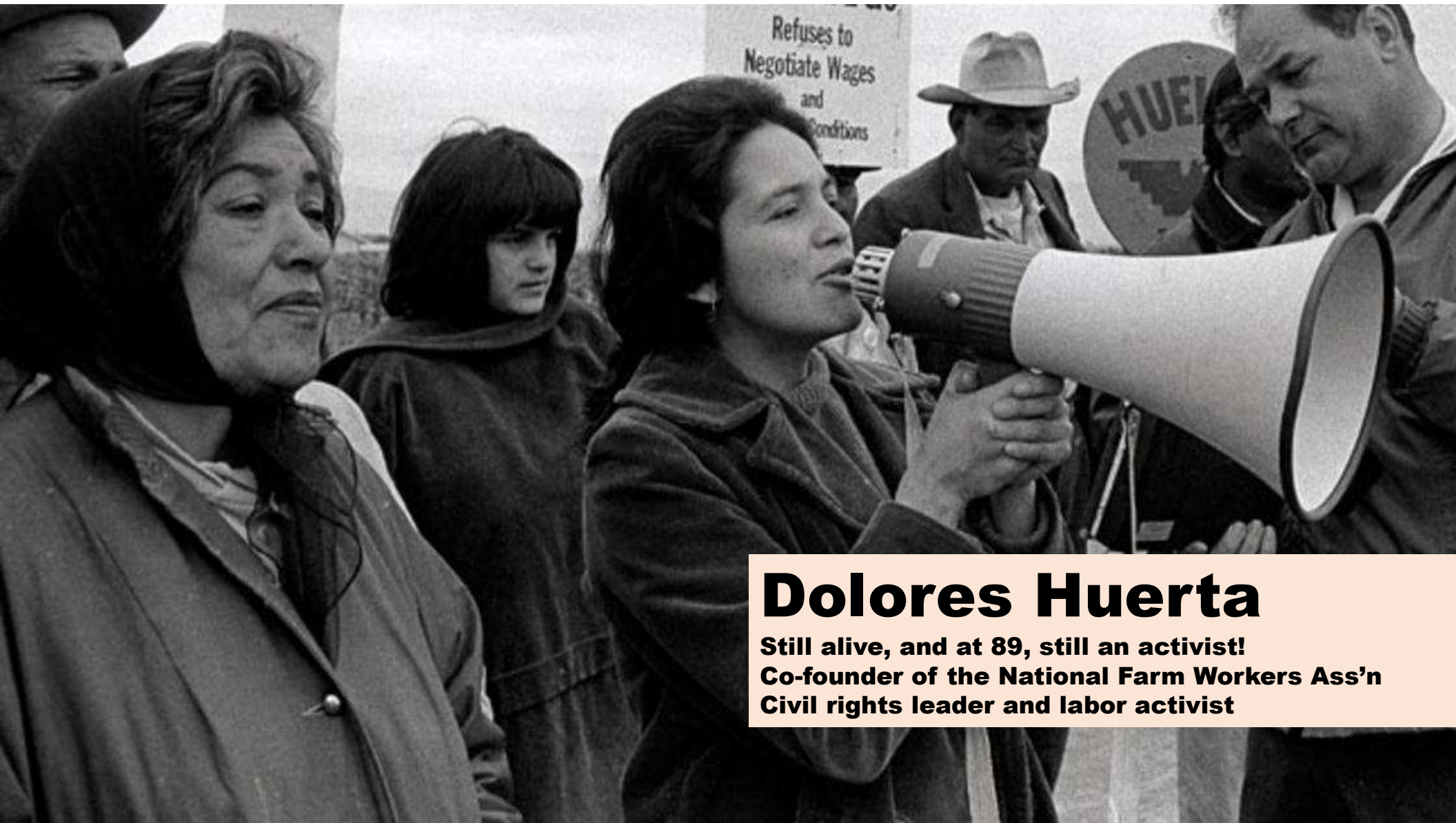
**“Picture of Don Jose's children, which he received during his stay in California as a Bracero.”  
(Bracero Archive, [braceroarchive.org](http://braceroarchive.org))**



# **Cesar Chavez**

**1927-1993**

**Co-founder of the National Farm Workers Ass'n  
Civil rights leader and labor activist**



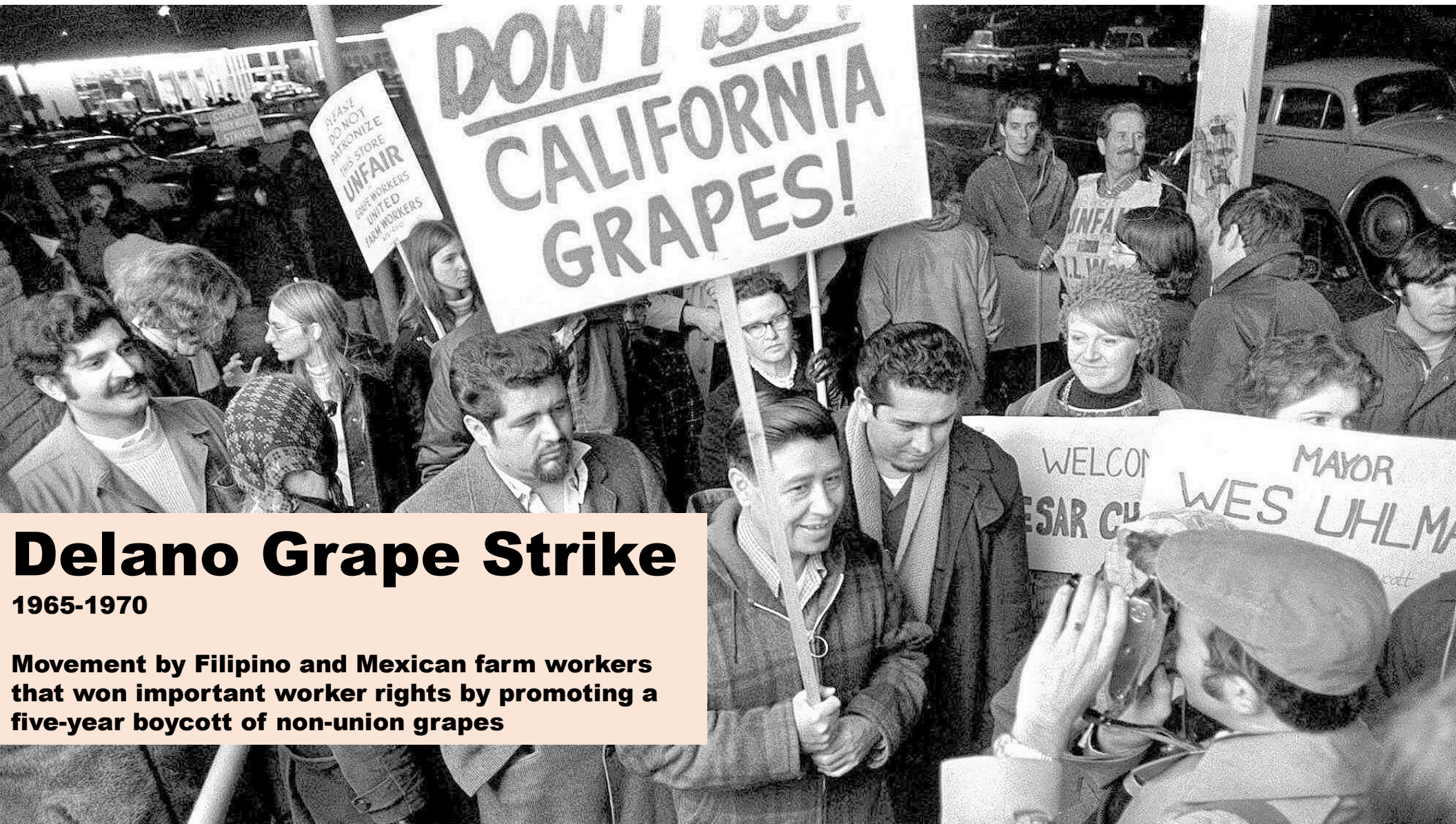
# **Dolores Huerta**

**Still alive, and at 89, still an activist!**

**Co-founder of the National Farm Workers Ass'n**

**Civil rights leader and labor activist**



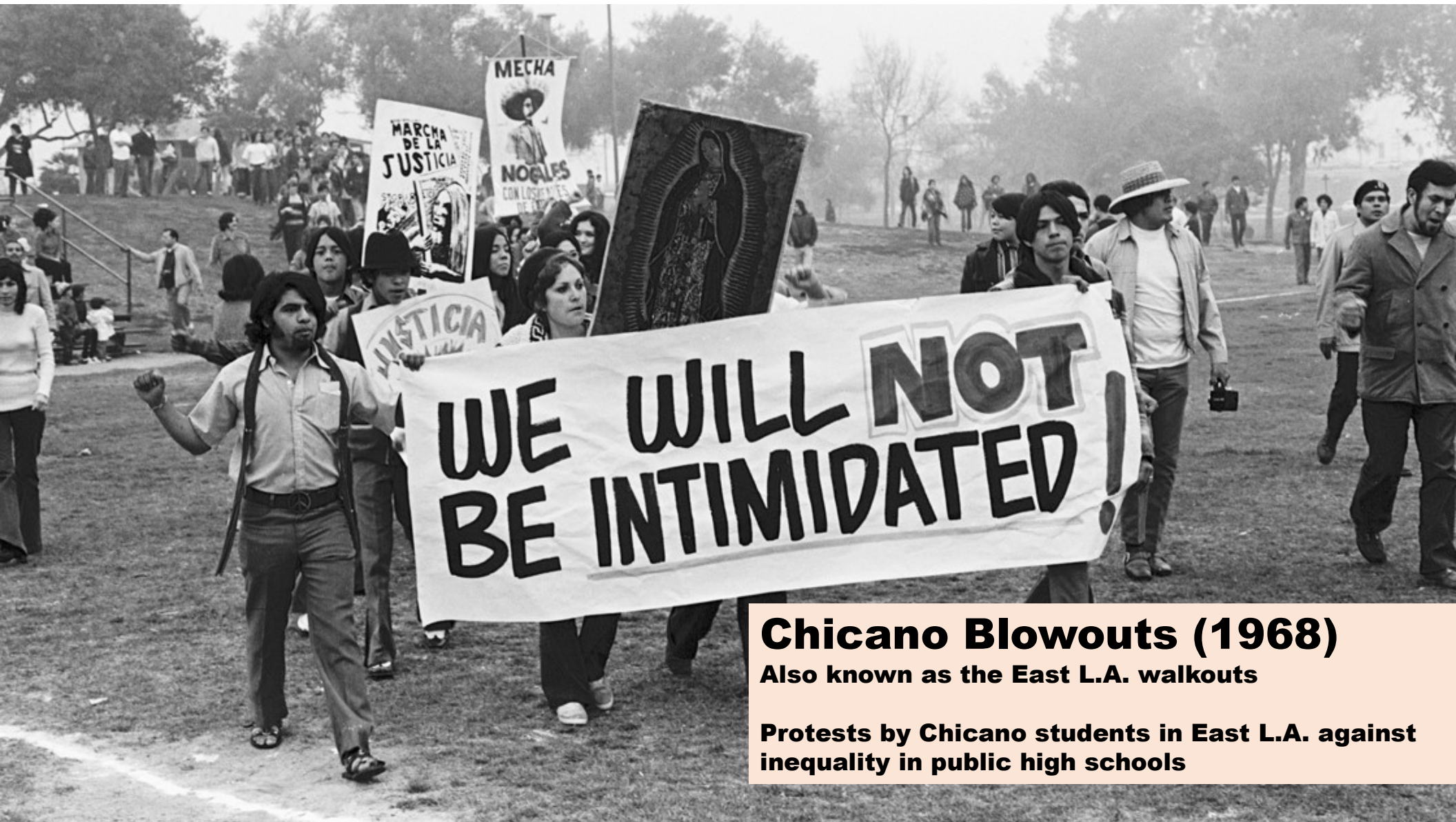


# Delano Grape Strike

1965-1970

**Movement by Filipino and Mexican farm workers that won important worker rights by promoting a five-year boycott of non-union grapes**





## **Chicano Blowouts (1968)**

**Also known as the East L.A. walkouts**

**Protests by Chicano students in East L.A. against inequality in public high schools**



## **Chicano Blowouts (1968)**

**Also known as the East L.A. walkouts**

# The Frito Bandito

Frito-Lay ad campaign  
1967-1971







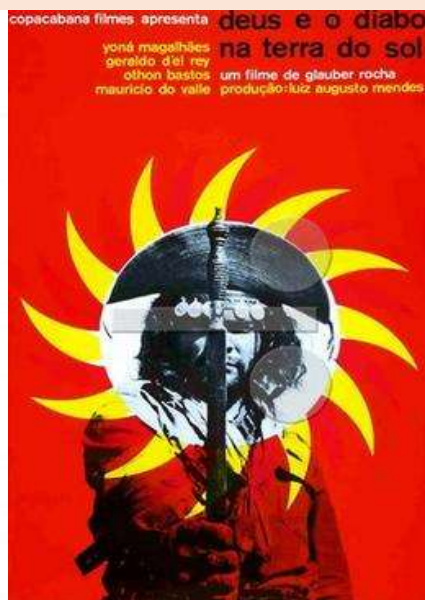
## **IMAGE (San Antonio) NMAADC (D.C.)**

**Chicano media activist  
groups form in 1968 to  
confront racist  
stereotypes in  
advertising, like the  
Frito Bandito**

**From the start, then, Chicano cinema has had to mark out a space for itself between **a weapon and a formula**, between the political weapon of New Latin American Cinema and the economic formula of Hollywood.**

Chon A. Noriega

“Between a Weapon and a Formula”



# Notes on Chicano Cinema

## Jason C. Johansen (1979)

Hollywood cinema is one of intellectual colonization. It attempts to pass off its distorted realities and values of a ruling class as natural and desirable to Third World peoples, including Chicanos. It is not a cinema that asks us to pause and reflect on our situation....Chicano film can take the appropriate steps toward **an alternative cinema** — one that fills the gap created by Hollywood and its refusal and/or inability to impart socially useful information to Chicanos.

### Six pillars

The demystification of film

The decolonization of minds

Reflective and open-ended

The altering of consciousness

Effect social change

A Chicano film language



**Between 1987 and 1988, Hollywood released four Chicano-Latino feature films. The success of these films...led studio executives and others to predict a “Hispanic Hollywood.” The proof of that claim, however, was attributed to “Hispanic” demographics and market studies on “Hispanic” movie attendance, and not the two-decade Chicano film movement.**

**Chon A. Noriega**  
**“Between a Weapon and a Formula”**

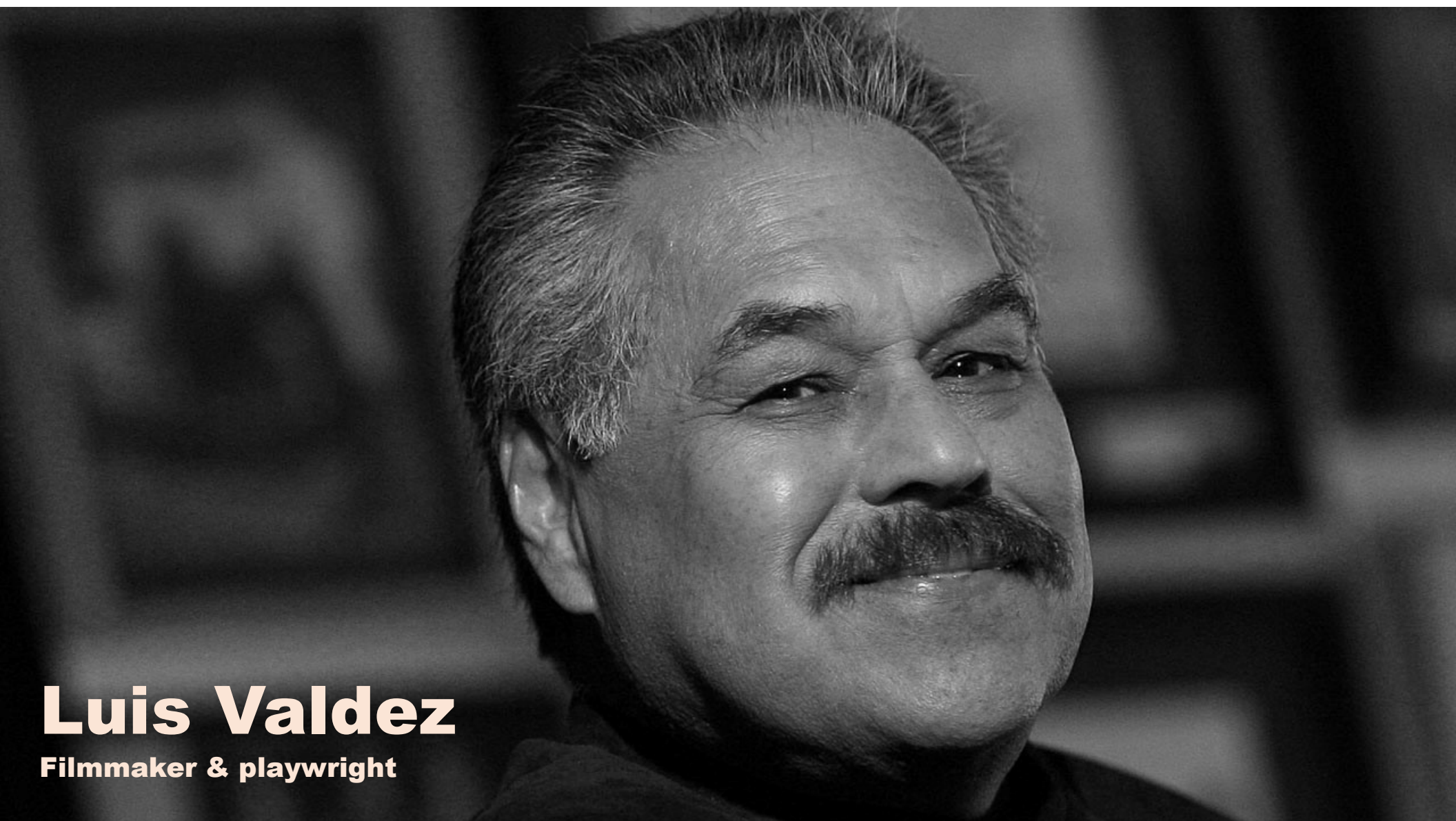




**I propose that Chicano films and videos at times conflate the weapon and the formula, so that beneath the conventional, formulaic genres and narrative structures of American cinema, one can find a substructure based upon traditional or popular Chicano and Mexican forms.**

Chon A. Noriega

“Between a Weapon and a Formula”



**Luis Valdez**

**Filmmaker & playwright**

**EL TEATRO CAMPESINO**



**FARM WORKERS THEATER**





***I Am Joaquín***

d. Luis Valdez  
(1969)







***Zoot Suit***  
d. Luis Valdez  
(1981)



***La Bamba***

d. Luis Valdez  
(1987)





***La Bamba***

**d. Luis Valdez  
(1987)**

Three defining elements of Chicano art & culture:

**resistance**  
**maintenance**  
**affirmation**

*Arte Chicano: A Comprehensive Annotated Bibliography of Chicano Art, 1965-1981*  
Shifra Goldman & Tomás Ybarra-Frausto

Fourth defining element of Chicano art & culture to think about art made after 1981:

**mestizaje**

1. Mexican and Chicano thinkers used *mestizaje* to locate the historical origins of national character in the racial mixture between Spaniard and Indian
2. Became used to refer to “neoindigenism” that sought an alternative to European and Anglo American influences
3. Now used as a way to deconstruct the notion of a dominant culture entirely; using the idea of a border culture, one of mixing, to understand Chicano life and art

“Between a Weapon and a Formula”  
*Chicanos and Film*  
Chon Noriega



# **Cristina Ibarra**

**Filmmaker**

**UT-RTF graduate (1997)**

**Cristina Ibarra has been making award-winning films for PBS that explore the US-Mexico border for the past sixteen years. Her most recent documentary, *Las Marthas*, premiered on Independent Lens in 2014. The New York Times called it “a striking alternative portrait of border life”. Her PBS documentary collaboration, *The Last Conquistador*, had a national broadcast on POV. USA Today called the film “Heroic”. *Dirty Laundry: A Homemade Telenovela*, her first short fiction, won multiple awards and was broadcast on PBS. Ibarra has created mini-films with the NY International Latino Film Festival, LPB and the Latina collective [fulana.org](http://fulana.org).**





# ***Las Marthas***

**d. Cristina Ibarra  
(2014)**



***The Infiltrators (2019)***

**d. Alex Rivera & Cristina Ibarra**



**“In the early 1970s, UCLA served as a training ground for most Chicano filmmakers. Given the imperative to spread the message about the movement, students often turned to television projects while still in school, producing minority public affairs shows and specials created as a result of organized protests.”**



**Chon Noriega**  
*Between a Weapon and  
a Formula*



***El Norte***  
**d. Gregory Nava**  
**(1984)**



***El Norte* is a great film, one of the year's best, for two different kinds of reasons. One is its stunning visual and musical power; the approach of the film is not quasi-documentary, but poetic, with fantastical images that show us the joyous hearts of these two people. The second reason is that **this is the first film to approach the subject of "undocumented workers" solely through their eyes.** This is not one of those docudramas where we half-expect a test at the end, but a film like *The Grapes of Wrath* that gets inside the hearts of its characters and lives with them.**

**Roger Ebert  
1984**

