

Digging Up the Past



Building the Future: Honoring the Past

Welcome to the Fall 2025 edition of *Digging up the Past*. Fall brings with it LGBTQ+ History Month and Latinx Heritage Month as well as Día de los Muertos – when those of us of Latinx descent honor our antepasad@s. Thus, in this issue we honor our diverse Latinx and LGBTQ+ pasts with a focus of Chicax history, and on the words of a fierce LGBTQ+ ally – Dolores Huerta. In these pages you will find quotations from the speeches of Dolores Huerta, History Haiku, an article about a fierce activist from the 1930s (Emma Tenayuca), and much, much more. Remember to complete the crossword puzzle and/or the quiz sheet at the back of the issue and bring them to Wilson-Short 301 for a swag bag or loaded history mug. As we move toward October and the time of remembering our antepasad@s, below I make my own offering – a brief history of how and why, each October, we celebrate Día de los Muertos. A longer, more detailed version of this history appears in *Chola Pinup* (September 2016), which you can still find online.

Día de los Muertos is a hybrid holiday – a mestiz@ holiday – blending Indigenous traditions with those of European colonizers. While sometimes we think of pre-colonial Mexico as Aztec, it is important to remember that the roots of Día de los Muertos are not only in Aztec culture, but also in Toltec and Mayan cultures. Like the famous calendars of the Americas, the more we learn about the history of Día, the more complicated that history becomes.

The blending of Indigenous and European cultures was a product of violent conquest. When, in the sixteenth-century the Spanish arrived in the Americas they came with the intention of converting Indigenous peoples to Catholicism and then exploiting them as a labor force. The result was often genocide, similar to that of English, and later Euro-American, settlers in North America. Throughout the Americas, the Spanish colonizers brought clergy with them wherever they travelled, with the specific goal of converting everyone they encountered to Catholicism. Peoples resisted, in part, by taking some of the religion of the Spanish and blending it with their own.¹

Vol. 5, No. 1-2 Contents:	
Welcome.....	1
Undergraduate Research Projects.....	4
Quotable People: Dolores Huerta.....	8
History Haiku.....	9
Featured Article: Emma Tenayuca, Warrior for Justice	10
Tenayuca Crossword Puzzle.....	14



¹ David Carrasco with Scott Sessions, *Daily Life of the Aztecs: People of the Sun and Earth* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 21-55.

Prior to the Spanish conquest, what did Day of the Dead look like? We know that the first peoples of Mexico had celebrated their dead for at least three thousand years prior to the arrival of the Spanish. This means that the tradition goes back prior to the time of the Aztecs. Once the Aztecs became the dominant culture in central Mexico, the celebration was held during the month-long celebration of Mictecacihuatl, the Queen of Mictlán, who ruled over the afterlife. According to the Spanish missionary Sahagún the people

...used to place the image of the dead on ...grass wreaths. Then at dawn they put these images in their shrines, on top of beds of reed ... Once the images were placed there, they offered them food, tamales, and gruel, or a stew... Then they offered the images incense from an incense burner... And the rich sang and drank ... in honor of these gods and their dead, while the poor offered them only food.²

The incense was to help guide the dead to the place where their families and loved ones waited for them. Today, many communities still burn incense at altars, in addition, they might leave a glass of water (or a beer) for a loved one having made the long journey from the land of the dead to Pullman, or Oakland or the Yakima Valley -- wherever we may find ourselves missing our loved ones.

Again, returning to the lifeways of the peoples living in the Valley of Mexico, we find what might be the origins of Pan de Muerto/holiday sweets. In pre-colonial times, people made bread out of amaranth seed – which they then worked into the shapes of different deities. As part of the holiday, the people then ate the bread. They also brought marigolds, the flower of the dead to shrines and altars, and they lined streets with marigolds to lead the dead to their destinations. For those of us in Pullman, Washington, and in other northern places we sometimes make paper marigolds – and this is where the tradition finds its roots.



This is the celebration the Spanish encountered when they arrived in the Americas – a month of celebrating the dead with food and drink and a special bread and special prayers. Marigolds were found throughout the town as the deceased were welcomed home. The Spaniards viewed the celebration as pagan and tried to stamp it out but failed. Yet in addition to trying to control the holiday, the Spanish also made contributions to it. They introduced the tradition of going to Mass on the holiday, and they introduced much of the skeleton artwork with which we are familiar today. While skulls had been part of the earlier Indigenous culture and are the root of the sugar skulls that we eat today, the artwork and images of full-bodied skeletons – calaveras, may have their roots in our European histories. Again, Día de los Muertos is a hybrid holiday; it is the product of a mixing of cultures.³

It was during the Chicano movement of the late twentieth century that Día de Los Muertos became a significant celebration among Mexican Americans in the U.S. This is not to say that we did not celebrate Día prior to the Chicano Movement, but that most celebrations were home-based and low-key. The values of the time, of community empowerment and brown pride, brought new significance to holidays such as Día. This was the time of the great grape boycotts, when Cesar

² Bernadino de Sahagún, quoted in David Carrasco, *Religions of Mesoamerica: Cosmovision and Ceremonial Centers* (Illinois: Waveland, 1990), 143.

³ Stanley Brandes, "Iconography in Mexico's Day of the Dead," *Ethnohistory* 45, No.2 (1998): 190-218.

Chávez, Dolores Huerta, and Larry Itliong helped found a national union for Chicana farm workers, when Chicana/o high school students throughout the southwest went on strike to protest the structural racism that they faced daily in their classrooms, and Chicanas and Chicanos protested the U.S. War in Vietnam, in Seattle, and throughout the Southwest.⁴



Papel Picado

And so, as part of a renewal in our rich history, many Chicana communities began to gather to celebrate Día. One way of doing this was to build Altars. Because communities often have members from various places throughout Americas, different traditions mingled: someone from the area around Puebla might contribute papel picado, or cut paper; someone from Southern Mexico fresh fruit – piled high and; almost everyone would bring marigolds – the flowers of the dead.

When we celebrate Día, we celebrate all these things: our deep and rich history, our antepasad@s, and people we just miss too much. Our traditions go way back—back to a time before the Aztecas, changing and adapting to meet the needs of each generation. For me it remains a way to stay connected while living in the far north: connected to my community, my history, y sobre todo, to everyone I love who has passed to the next world. As your read through this issue of *Digging Up the Past*, think about the many people who made it possible for you to be here today, and the many antepasad@s you might honor this October. Think also about the many ways they worked to create a more just world, and the many ways you can honor them by building on that heritage. Wishing you a productive and powerful semester, with peace and love,

Dr@. Hz (Heidenreich Zuñiga)
Pullman, WA, Fall 2025

⁴ Yolanda Alaníz, *Viva La Raza: A History of Chicano Identity and Resistance* (Seattle: Redbone Press, 2008), 149-232.

THE FIELD OF HISTORY ALLOWS YOU TO ... “DIG UP THE PAST: ABSTRACTS BY STUDENTS OF HISTORY AT WSU

“June Jordan: The Revolutionary Poet Who Spoke for Justice,”
by Peyton Davis, History 369

What does it mean to fight with words? My research project explores the life and work of June Jordan, a groundbreaking Black feminist poet, essayist, and activist who used her writing to demand justice. I chose Jordan because her fearless voice speaks directly to today’s struggles for racial equality, gender rights, and political change. Through examining her poetry, speeches, and essays, I discovered how she turned personal pain into revolutionary art while uplifting marginalized communities. My sources included several of Jordan’s published collections including *Some of Us Did Not Die*, and *Civil Wars*, as well as scholarly critiques of her impact on intersectional feminism. One of my most compelling findings was how Jordan weaponized “Black English” as a tool of resistance in academia, defying elitist standards to celebrate her community’s language. Her famous “Poem About My Rights” (1978) connects sexual violence to global oppression, showing how systemic injustices intertwine. I also mapped her role in co-founding Poetry for the People, a Berkeley program that used poetry as a tool for activism. Jordan’s work proves that art can challenge power and heal wounds. Jordan’s life teaches us that your voice matters, no matter your age. Her blend of raw honesty and radical hope speaks directly to young people fighting for a better world, making her essential reading for activists, artists, and anyone ready to disrupt the status quo.



“Turn Left at Berlin: The Adaptation of the Autobahn into an American Institution,”
by Maxwell Malcom, History 469

War leads to death, suffering, and strife that only seems to destroy, never create. However, the blitz to end the Second World War would forever shape American society. American tanks rolled along the German Autobahn to level Nazi towns and strongholds in their path – a process that years later translated into the American Interstate highway system and still affects American society and culture to this day. The link between the Autobahn and the American Interstate is seldom acknowledged despite the undeniable connection. In order to legitimize its rule, the Third Reich forged a revolutionary highway system that embodied the epitome of form and function, with a sinister purpose – to bring Europe to its knees. The steward of the American Interstate, soon-to-be-president General Dwight Eisenhower, exploited the Autobahn in returning the war to Hitler’s doorstep. Having witnessed the awe-inspiring power of a mechanized nation, Eisenhower sought to replicate success at home. This was compounded by the increasing likelihood of a war with the Soviet Union. This study draws on newspapers and press releases from the time as well as secondary sources by scholars to examine the technological revolution of the Autobahn and its effect on the Interstate system. The very roads we travel every day for work and leisure were born out of an engine of war and the fear of nuclear annihilation.

“Countercultures of the Pacific Northwest: Black Panthers, Hippies, and Punks,”
by Alexis Sheldon, History 469

From the 1960s to the 1990s countercultural groups, such as the Black Panthers, hippies, and Riot Grrrl punks, played a significant role in the history of the Pacific Northwest. These groups formed in response to different kinds of oppression, such as racism, sexism, or capitalist exploitation, and/or in opposition to war. These countercultures are not often looked at in comparison to each other despite having many similarities, like forms of protest and shared beliefs. Often, they are portrayed or referred to in negative ways by mainstream media even though they did many positive things for their communities. The Black Panthers worked to build up their communities through food banks and medical centers. Hippies refused capitalist and conformist pressure. Riot Grrrl advocated for women's rights and safety within the punk scene and the world. Even though these groups worked hard to create better communities, they were demonized and discredited in mainstream media because they went against prevailing beliefs. To write this paper, I used primary sources, like autobiographies, photos, and newspaper articles. I also used secondary sources that focused on each specific counterculture. I found it interesting how similar the events and challenges of the past were to the modern day. Countercultures of the Pacific Northwest will be an interesting topic to research for anyone who is interested in today's activism and cultural movements, such as Black Lives Matter, solidarity with Palestine, or the underground electronic music and dance scene.



“From Ballots to Bullets: Nationalism and Arming in Ireland, 1910-1916,”
By Coby Stanton , History 469

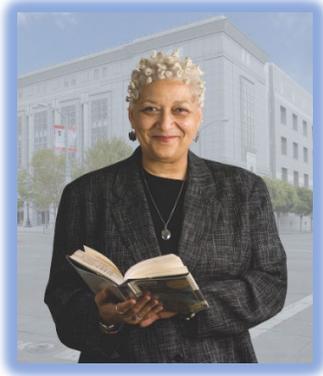
Leading up to and during World War I, Ireland went through a transformative period characterized by the arming and organization of paramilitary groups. These groups formed in response to the prospect of Home Rule: the establishment of an Irish Parliament that would grant Ireland considerable independence. The most notable paramilitaries were formed by Irish Nationalists (who desired an Irish Parliament) and Unionists (who desired to remain within the United Kingdom). Considering that Irish politics, discourse, and identities have been anchored in nationalism since the late eighteenth century, I investigated the relationship between nationalism and the arming processes of Irish paramilitaries in the early twentieth century. Using books about Irish nationalism, Parliament debate summaries, witness statements, newspapers, and other political documents to understand how people in Ireland viewed arming, I argued that nationalist beliefs intensified arming and paramilitary organization, culminating in the 1916 Easter Rising. Further, Irish Nationalists faced greater difficulties when attempting to arm themselves, as opposed to the Unionists who had better funding and support from the British military. This study is significant because nationalism remains a very important part of Irish society today, especially as people still question whether Ireland has truly achieved independence. More generally, observing the relationship between Nationalists and Unionists reveals themes that are applicable to modern conflicts, such as the Russo-Ukraine War and Israel-Palestine conflict.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Aug. 29, 1970: The 3rd Moratorium Against the U.S. War in Vietnam takes place in Laguna Park in L.A., attracting 10,000-30,000 people. Police break up the peaceful gathering and use force against the demonstrators. Ruben Salazar, a writer for the *L.A. Times* is killed when he is hit in the head by a tear-gas canister shot by the L.A.P.D. (UW).

September 8, 1965: Larry Itliong and the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC) call a strike against grape growers in California. César Chavez, Dolores Huerta, and the United Farmer Worker Association join him (Zinn; UW).

September 9, 1915: Carter G Woodson founds the Association for the study of Negro Life and History. Often called the “Father of African American History,” Woodson also founded Negro History Week, which grew to be what we now celebrate as Black History Month (TBH).



September 11, 1948: Jewelle Gomez, author of the award-winning (Black, lesbian, vampire novel) *Gilda Stories*, is born in Boston, Massachusetts. A poet, novelist, and playwright, she was also a founding member of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), and part of the 2004 lawsuit to legalize same-sex marriage in California (OWA).

From “Outwords,”
<https://theoutwordsarchive.org/interview/gomez-jewelle/>

September 14, 1911, El Primer Congreso Mexicanista takes place in Laredo, Texas. Its goal was to address issues and discrimination that the Mexican and Chicax communities faced in the United States, whether in labor, social spaces, or access to education (HL).



September 16, 1810: Father Miguel Hidalgo y Castillo makes the *grito* of liberation from the church tower in Dolores, Guanajuato, marking the beginning of the Mexican War for Independence. The war raged on for a full decade, but in the end, the people won their independence, with their national Constitution ratified in 1824 (LOC).

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

September 23, 1863: Mary Church Terrell, educator civil rights activist is born in Memphis, Tennessee. Terrell taught at Wilberforce College, was a charter member of the NAACP, and was the first Black woman to serve on the District of Columbia Board of Education (TBH).



Thurgood Marshall Stamp,
Smithsonian National Postal Museum,
<https://postalmuseum.si.edu/>

October 2, 1967: Thurgood Marshall is sworn in as the first Black Supreme Court Justice. Prior to his appointment he served as an attorney for the NAACP, winning the case of Harriet Elizabeth Brown who sued that Calvert County Board of Education for equal pay. At the national level, before his appointment to the Supreme Court, Marshall argued 32 cases in front of the Court, winning 29 of them (TBH; Zinn).

November 5, 1968: Shirley Chisholm becomes first Black woman elected to Congress, representing Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. She previously served in the New York State Legislature. While serving in the U.S. Congress she fought for racial and gender equality and to end the U.S. War in Vietnam. She was also the co-founder of the national Women's Political Caucus (TBH; WHorg)

November 8, 1977. Harvey Milk becomes the first openly gay candidate elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. Milk was also a cofounder of the Castro Village Association, one of the first LGBT+ business organizations in the U.S. As a member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, he advocated for low-cost housing, sponsored anti-discrimination bills and fought to establish day care centers for working mothers (SFGAY; Harvey Milk Foundation).

Sources: Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/today-in-history/> (LOC); Oscar Rosales Castañeda, "Timeline: Movimiento from 1960-1985," Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project, University of Washington https://depts.washington.edu/civilr/mecha_timeline.htm (UW); "Outwords," <https://theoutwordsarchive.org> (OWA); San Francisco Gay History, "This Month in History," <https://www.sfgayhistory.com/timeline/this-month/> (SFGay); "This Day in History," Zinn Education Project, <https://www.zinnedproject.org/news/tdih/> (Zinn); "Today in Black History," University of Pennsylvania African Studies Center, https://www.africa.upenn.edu/K-12/Today_B_History.html (TBH); Women's History, "Biographies", <https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies>



From the *Smithsonian*, "Our Shared Future"

**Dolores Huerta: Labor
Activist, Feminist, Patriot
(b.1930)**

Dolores Huerta grew up in Stockton, California. Her mother held a strong commitment to social justice, and her grandfather encouraged her to speak out for what she believed in. After finishing college, Huerta became a school teacher but felt called to do something about the exploitation of workers in California. She began working with the Community Service Organization, a justice organization in California, but eventually left the CSO to co-found the United Farm Worker Union with César Chávez. Huerta spent the rest of her life working for worker rights and human rights; in 2012 she was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor in the U.S. Below, find quotations from the many speeches and interviews she gave while working for a more just world.

- ❖ Because when you are dealing with a big social fight and trying to make changes, the people that you are dealing with are not going to ... do things on the basis of justice—they respond to only one thing and that is economic power. So somehow, you have to hit them in that pocketbook where they have their heart... (UCLA Speech, February 22, 1978, in the *Dolores Huerta Reader*).
- ❖ So, you always wanted be in God's grace, right? And the way that you did that was to help people, to help other people out. Never expect any kind of remuneration for that help (Interview with Vincent Harding, Veterans Hope Project, in the *Dolores Huerta Reader*).
- ❖ We're going to reach out to each other, we're going to come together, we're going to walk the union picket lines, we're going to write letters for legislation... to stop incarcerations of our Latino and African-American youth... More money for education. We're going to come together... working together we can make it happen. Bring on human rights for everyone. ¡Sí se puede! (Keynote Speech at 21st National Conference on LGBT Equality, Denver Colorado, January 29, 2009, Iowa State University Archives of Women's Political Communication).

HISTORY HAIKU

History Haiku is one of many creative endeavors in which history students engage. They craft snapshots of history, rendered in three lines (with syllables of 5-7-5). Below find several haiku by students in History 250 (Peoples of America). See if you can form a vivid mental image of the events and people of whom they write.

Sequoyah's fierce dream
Hope from a syllabary
Making History

Olivia Russell

When men ruled labor
Emma Tenayuca spoke
Calling us to strike

Owen Smithies

Books, clinics and guns
Shields against a silent war
Black Panther Party

Mia Lungin

An unchosen home
Thousands died on the path - Tears
and blood soaked the Earth

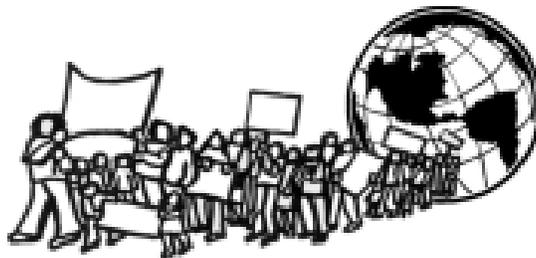
Owen Smithies

Voice for the workers
She plants hope in broken ground
Huerta won't back down

Mia Lungin

A harvest on pause
Nixon sends more grapes to war
Soldiers eat our strike

Kade Barry



Do you have history haiku you would like to publish? Submit your work to Dr. Heidenreich Zuñiga at Lheidenr@wsu.edu. Be sure to write "haiku submission" in the subject line.

Featured Article

Emma Tenayuca: A Warrior for Justice in a Time of Political Oppression (by Professor Heidenreich Zuñiga)

The nineteen thirties were a time of political activism among Mexican Americans and other Latinxs, and in many labor and activist movements, Mexicanas and Latinas held leadership roles. Among the women organizers was Emma Tenayuca. Tenayuca is best known as the leader of the 1938 pecan sheller's strike, but her activism began long before 1938. Looking to her life, we can learn many critical lessons about persistence in difficult times.

A Time of Struggle:

During the decade of the 1930s an estimated one million Mexican nationals and Chicaxns were deported from the United States. Facing a national depression, the U.S. government sought a scapegoat and found one in the bodies of the Mexican workers who had helped build the country, especially the Southwest. Representatives from states as diverse as Texas and Washington sponsored bills to restrict immigration from Mexico. In January of 1931, Secretary of labor William Doak convinced Congress to appropriate funds for deportation campaigns, and efforts to repatriate (a euphemism for deportation) Mexican nationals increased with federal, state, and local governments coordinating their efforts. While the largest campaigns took place in California and Texas, Mexicanxs as well as Chicaxns throughout the Southwest and Midwest were forced to leave their homes. From the very beginning of the deportation campaigns, Mexicanxs, Chicaxns, and some Euro-American business owners protested the injustice of the programs. Spanish language newspapers in Mexico and the United States labeled the campaigns racist, as did community groups. Growers and ranchers argued that U.S. agriculture needed Mexican labor, and some religious leaders spoke out against the injustice of the actions.¹

By the end of the 1930s, many small barrios (Mexicanx/Chicanx neighborhoods) had completely disappeared, and small businesses in regions where Mexicanxs once lived suffered severe economic losses. In Los Angeles alone, banks had lost over seven million dollars in deposits.² Deportations were devastating to the neighborhoods and towns from which people were deported. The deportation programs sent shockwaves through our communities, and many people responded by trying to be as American as possible. This was the environment in which Emma Tenayuca came of age and in which she began to work as a labor activist.



"In Los Angeles, banks lost over 7,000,000 in deposits" Image from Wells Fargo History.

¹ Rudolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*, 6th ed. (New York: Pearson, 2007), 173-175.

² Zaragosa Vargas, *Crucible of Struggle: A History of Mexican American from Colonial Times to the Present Era* (New York: Oxford, 2011), 217-218.

Emma Tenayuca grew up in the segregated Westside of San Antonio, where poverty and malnutrition were common. Tenayuca's maternal grandparents raised her. Her grandfather was able to get skilled work as a carpenter – he also followed politics. In fact, Tenayuca developed an early understanding of transnational politics when, at age seven, her grandparents took her to the *Plaza del Zacate* (the public square) on Sunday outings to listen to *Magonistas* who sought to address the rights of working-class families on both sides of the border. As a teenager Tenayuca attended Brackenridge High School and while still in high school joined a reading group that discussed socialist ideas and economic systems that might protect worker rights.³ These are considered radical ideas now, and they were considered radical ideas in the 1930s.

In 1933, when she was just 17 years old, Tenayuca joined the Fink Cigar Strike. She participated in the picket line and was arrested. During the strike, she met Mrs. W.H. Ernst and together they formed an organization for unemployed workers called the Workers Alliance. Through the Workers Alliance Tenayuca protested the beatings of immigrants by the Border Patrol and fought for a minimum wage, for the right to strike, for equal rights for immigrant workers; the Alliance also fought against deportations. Employers felt so threatened by the successes of the Worker's Alliance that they began to use police to break up their meetings, and they called in the Immigration Service to threaten workers with deportation.⁴



Emma Tenayuca's mugshot from a 1937 protest. National Archives. <https://text-message.blogs.archives.gov/2024/09/17/surveillance-of-a-workers-rights-icon-emma-tenayucas-fbi-file/>

In 1937, concerned with the number of workers who were joining the Worker's Alliance, the chief of police in San Antonio, Chief Kilday, led a raid on their hall. Police stormed the building with hatchets, destroyed property and confiscated literature. Tenayuca and five others were arrested on charges of disturbing the peace – even though it was the police that rioted. The police chief made sure it was known that Tenayuca was a communist, hoping to drive workers away from the union.⁵

The Pecan Sheller's Strike of 1938:

Chief Kilday's plan failed, and the Workers Alliance went on to support the Pecan Shellers Strike of 1938. During the 1930s, the nation's pecan production was centered in San Antonio, TX. Thousands Mexican and Mexican American laborers worked in crowded sheds with inadequate sanitary facilities and poor ventilation and lighting. Wages were \$2.73/week per worker at a time when the average American wage was \$26/week. Often, instead of being paid in cash, workers

³ Gabriela González, "Carolina Munguía and Emma Tenayuca: The Politics of Benevolence and Radical Reform," *Frontiers (Boulder)* 24, no. 2/3 (2003): 210-213.

⁴ Vargas, *Crucible*, 230; Zaragoza Vargas, "Tejana Radical: Emma Tenayuca and the San Antonio Labor Movement During the Great Depression," *Pacific Historical Review* 66 No. 4 (1977): 562-573.

⁵ González, 217-219.

were paid in food from the company store. In January 1938 these wages were cut, sparking a strike involving nearly eight thousand workers most of whom were women.⁶

The Worker's Alliance supported the strike, and with them, Emma Tenayuca became involved in the strike, emerging as a leader. The three-month-long strike resulted in the arrest of over one thousand workers, and the police tear-gassed the strikers at least eight times. Emma Tenayuca and other strike leaders were arrested on charges of "communist agitation." San Antonio's two major newspapers condemned the strike. Because she was a communist, Emma Tenayuca became an easy target; soon the union supporting the pecan shellers pressured Tenayuca to step down as a leader. Tenayuca, committed to the success of the strike, did step down, and the workers went on to win the strike.⁷

In 1939 Emma Tenayuca, by then chairperson of the Texas Communist Party, was scheduled to speak at a meeting in the San Antonio municipal auditorium. The Ku Klux Klan, the Texas Pioneers, and the Elks all tried to get the mayor of San Antonio to ban Tenayuca from speaking, but he refused. And so, on the evening of August 25th, about 150 Communist Party members tried to conduct their meeting at the municipal auditorium -- with 5000 people protesting outside. When the crowd heard the members sing the "Star-Spangled Banner" they broke into a riot, hurling rocks and bricks at the building. Inside, police officers guided the Communist Party members through a tunnel extending from the auditorium to the San Antonio River. They escaped just before the crowd broke through the police barrier and vandalized the auditorium, tearing down curtains, busting chairs, and destroying public property.⁸

After the riot at the municipal auditorium Emma Tenayuca received so many death threats that it became almost impossible for her to speak in public – to make matters worse, no one in Texas would hire her; she was blacklisted by the entire business community of Texas. Eventually she moved to Los Angeles, and then San Francisco. In San Francisco she earned her B.A. from San Francisco State and became a reading teacher.⁹ Yet Chicanas and other working-class women continued to seek her out for advice, and eventually, at the end of the twentieth century, historians began to write of her activism. Today Emma Tenayuca stands as an example of a mujer who stood up for what she believed was right, and who worked to create a more just society even when the price was high.

I was pretty defiant. I fought against poverty, actually starvation, high infant death rates, disease and hunger and misery. I would do the same thing again.

Emma Tenayuca, reflecting on the Pecan Sheller's Strike

⁶ Arlene Sánchez-Walsh, "Emma Tenayuca, Religious Elites, and the 1938 Pecan-Shellers' Strike," in ed. *The Pew and the Picket Line: Christianity and the American Working Class*, ed. Christopher D. Cantwell, Heath W. Carter, and Janine Giordano Drake (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2016), 148.

⁷ Vargas, "Tejana Radical," 568-9; Sánchez-Walsh, 161.

⁸ González, 219-220.

⁹ González, 220; Sánchez-Walsh, 163.

Learn More About Emma Tenayuca and Chicana History:

Ruiz, Vicki L. *From out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

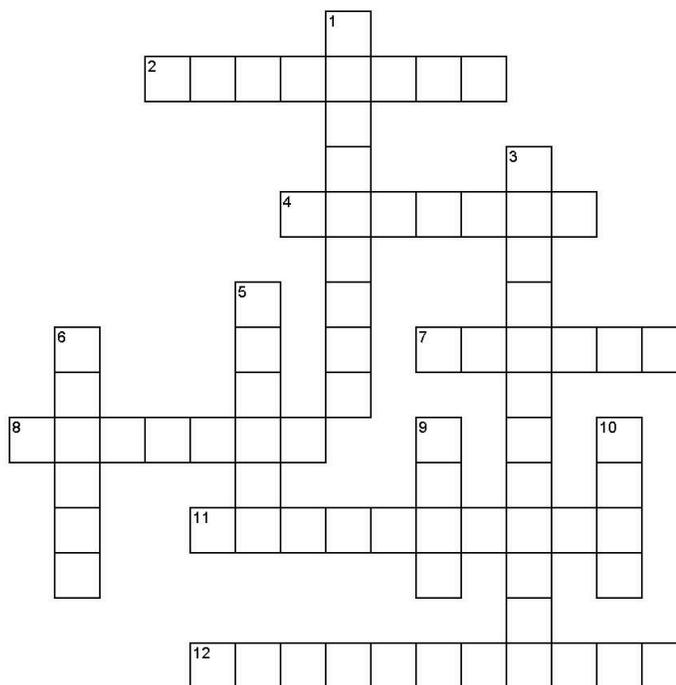
Speed, Jennifer and Ellen Riojas Clark, eds. *Revolutionary Women of Texas and Mexico: Portraits of Soldaderas, Saints, and Subversives*. San Antonio, Texas: Trinity University Press, 2020.

U.S. National Park Service. “Emma Tenayuca.” <https://www.nps.gov/people/emma-tenayuca.htm>.

Vargas, Zaragosa. *Crucible of Struggle: A History of Mexican Americans from Colonial Times to the Present Era*. New York: Oxford, 2011.

Working for Justice

The Life of Emma Tenayuca



www.CrosswordWeaver.com

ACROSS

- 2 The Worker's _____ supported the Pecan Shellers' Strike.
- 4 After Emma Tenayuca was forced to leave Texas, she became a _____.
- 7 Both the cigar workers and the pecan shellers did this to protest for better wages.
- 8 Emma Tenayuca grew up in San _____.
- 11 The name of the historical era in which Emma Tenayuca grew up.
- 12 After the Pecan Shellers' Strike, businesses in San Antonio _____ Tenayuca so that she could not get a job.

DOWN

- 1 Her grandfather's job:
- 3 In the 1930s, this hurt the economy:
- 5 Who tear-gassed workers during the Pecan Shellers' Strike?
- 6 The Pecan Shellers' Strike lasted three _____.
- 9 Emma Tenayuca tried to create a more _____ society.
- 10 In 1933 she helped with the _____ Cigar Strike.

WORD BANK: Alliance, antonio, blacklisted, carpenter, deportations, depression, fink, just, months, police, strike, teacher.

Autumn History Quiz (all answers can be found in this edition of *Digging up the Past*)

This flower was used by the Aztecs and continues to be used to honor the dead today:



Who said, “We’re going to reach out to each other, we’re going to come together, we’re going to walk the union picket lines, we’re going to write letters for legislation... to stop incarcerations of our Latino and African-American youth” ?

The author of the *Gilda Stories*, she also helped found the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation:



Raised by her grandparents, she grew up to be a labor activist, and led the Pecan Sheller’s Strike of 1938:

She grew up in Stockton, California, and co-founded the United Farm Worker Union (with César Chávez and Larry Itliong):



Bring your answers to the Department of History Office in Wilson-Short 301 (Washington State University, Pullman) for your LOADED HISTORY MUG!