

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE BROWN BUFFALO

DISCUSSION GUIDE

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HOW TO ACCESS THIS FILM

*The Rise and Fall of the
Brown Buffalo* airs nationally
on PBS on **FRIDAY MARCH
23, 2018 AT 9:00 pm** Eastern
time. Check local listings.

After that date, the film will be
available for streaming for a
limited time on **PBS.org**

Public libraries and
educational institutions can
use their Kanopy accounts to
stream the film at
Kanopy.com.

BROWNBUFFALOFILM.COM

ABOUT the FILM



JESSE CELEDON AS OSCAR ZETA ACOSTA, PHOTO: RAFAEL GARDENAS

The Rise and Fall of the Brown Buffalo is a fresh and genre-defying film about the life of radical Chicano lawyer, author and countercultural icon, Oscar Zeta Acosta — the basis for the character Dr. Gonzo in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, written by his friend and legendary journalist-provocateur, Hunter S. Thompson.

The author of two groundbreaking autobiographical novels, *Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo* and *The Revolt of the Cockroach People*, Acosta's powerful literary voice, brash courtroom style, and notorious revolutionary antics made him a revered figure within the Chicano movement of the 1960s and 70s, and offered one of the most brazen assaults on the status quo and white supremacy seen at the time. Yet, Acosta is more known for his turn as Thompson's bumbling sidekick in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* than for his own work exposing racial bias, hypocrisy, and repression within the California justice system.

Channeling the spirit of the psychedelic 60s and the joyful irreverence of “Gonzo” journalism, *The Rise and Fall of the Brown Buffalo* shows Acosta's personal and creative evolution playing out against the backdrop of a society in turmoil. Beginning with his origins in segregated rural California, then to his stint as a Baptist missionary in the jungles of Panama, to his radicalization in the Chicano movement of the late 60s, and finally his mysterious disappearance off the coast of Mexico in 1974, Director Phillip Rodriguez offers a vision of a complex figure at once wholly unique and emblematic of a generation.

Relevant now more than ever, *The Rise and Fall of the Brown Buffalo* explores issues of racial identity, criminal justice, politics, and media representation, while revealing the personal story of a troubled but brilliant man coming to terms with his identity and finding meaning in the struggles of his people.

Using this Guide:

La Raza was a Los Angeles-based bilingual newspaper turned magazine that amplified the voices of The Chicano Rights Movement between 1967 and 1977. With a strong do-it-yourself spirit, the publication began as a tool for organizing, centering social justice, and featuring the work of, often self-made, photographers, journalists, artists and activists. In the film *The Rise and Fall of the Brown Buffalo*, Acosta recounts his first visit to *La Raza*'s underground headquarters — an operation kept quiet due to its radical exposure of racism and inequality. At first, the group expressed concern that Acosta might be a government plant sent to spy on their activities. When he explained that he was writer and trained attorney, they identified Acosta as an ally positioned to support their cause, and welcomed him into the fold. This guide's format and design has been inspired by *La Raza*'s aesthetics. Each section offers information, followed by methods for group engagement including questions for deeper thinking, activity suggestions, and suggested resources for deeper study.

EDUCATION

Chicano Students Are Leading a Movement!

The Rise and Fall of the Brown Buffalo introduces Oscar Zeta Acosta's involvement with the Chicano student movement. When 15,000 kids walked out of school, challenging the discriminatory educational practices in East Los Angeles schools, the organizers were charged with felony conspiracy for "disturbing the peace." Acosta, a new lawyer without much experience, took the case on, defending the activists against threats of life in prison.

The Precursor

Before the Chicano Movement of the 1960s burst into action, the 1940s and 50s saw significant strides in the quest for Latino-American justice. In 1947, *Mendez v. Westminster* Supreme Court case was a case that barred the segregation of Latino children from white children in schools — predating *Brown v. Board of Education*'s striking down of "separate but equal" as a violation of the United States Constitution. In 1954, *Hernandez v. Texas* ensured the 14th amendment rights to all racial groups, not just black and white people. These landmark cases snowballed into a growing call for change.

The Student Struggle

Young people stood on the forefront



"CHICANO POWER (ROOSEVELT HIGH SCHOOL WALKOUTS)," 1970
PHOTO: OSCAR CASTILLO

of the civil rights movement, pushing forward ideals of self determination, equal access, and distribution of political power. The experience of Mexican-American students was in particularly dire shape. A ban on speaking Spanish in schools contributed to the pushing of Mexican-American students into vocational training programs and special needs classrooms, regardless of the individual's actual interests or needs. Students began to call into question eurocentric curriculums that ignored their history, culture, and lived experiences. The high dropout rates proved that these discriminatory practices were working to discourage Mexican-American students from pursuing higher education.

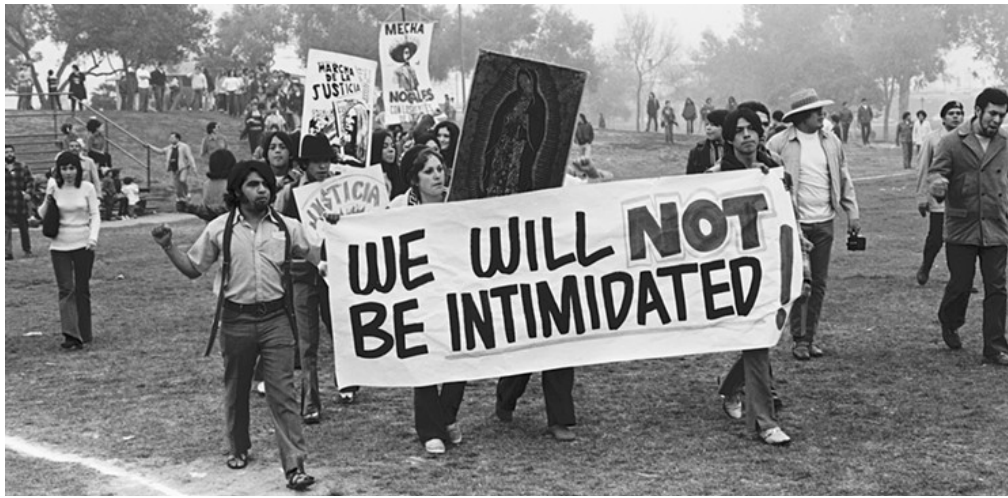
The Inspiration

Energy was bubbling as the Civil Rights Movement was fighting for African-Americans' rights. For young Chicanos, role models like Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta were gaining traction in their fight

for fair compensation and working conditions for farm workers, igniting a national boycott on grapes that began in 1965. Through worker strikes and hunger strikes, the workers made headway in 1970, when grape growers signed agreements acknowledging United Farm Workers of America (UFW) as a union. Art that celebrated Chicano culture and history began to cover community walls. A shifting consciousness was revealed as the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo — the 1848 agreement that ended the Mexican-American War, resulting in Mexican territory becoming the Southwestern U.S. — was thrown into question. Believing it to be Aztlán, their ancestral homeland, Chicano radicals demanded the land be returned to its people.

The Action

This growing energy erupted the week of March 1 to March 8, 1968, when approximately 15,000 students walked out of classes from local High Schools with demands for an equal, high quality, and culturally-relevant



LA MARCHA POR LA JUSTICIA, BELVEDERE PARK, JAN. 31, 1971 COURTESY OF THE PHOTOGRAPHER AND THE UCLA CHICANO STUDIES RESEARCH CENTER © LUIS C. GARZA

education. The police were on site with hard helmets, arresting students, or leading them back to the school administration. Like other civil rights protests, students were villainized, and even beaten by authorities. This week of action became known as The East L.A. Student Walkouts.

The Outcome

In the wake of the student walkouts, the Educational Issues Coordinating Committee (EICC) was formed to continue the fight for equal student rights. The group was comprised of community members and representatives from other significant Chicano rights groups: the Brown Berets, United Mexican-American Students, and The Young Citizens for Community Action, along with local newspapers *La Raza* and *Inside Eastside*. In a meeting held on March 11, 1968, the students presented a list of 39 demands to the Los Angeles Board of Education. The core of their needs centered on academic changes to the curriculum to provide culturally relevant history in textbooks, bilingual education, the recruitment of staff and administration that mirrored the identity of students in schools with a primarily Mexican-American

student body, and improvement of school facilities.

However, the momentum diverted to an urgent civil rights legal battle when 13 of the walkout organizers were arrested on felony conspiracy charges for “disturbing the peace.” The L.A. 13 became a high profile case, represented by Oscar Zeta Acosta and drawing media attention to the spectacle of the courtroom. The educational demands were largely forgotten.

But, eventually, the students’ efforts ushered in some change. The Department of Health, Education and Welfare, and the U.S. Supreme Court supported the student’s claim that barring non-English speaking students from getting an education was unlawful. In 1974, Congress passed the Equal Opportunity Act, equipping public schools with an increased number of bilingual education programs.

Read the full list of student demands of the Los Angeles Unified School District, here: <http://latinopia.com/latino-history/ela-high-school-walk-out-demands/>

Questions For Deeper Thinking:

- How was the Chicano struggle a mirror of, or connected to, the other movements of the 1960s?
- How is this struggle still relevant today? Can comparisons be drawn between the Chicano student movement walkouts with the self-organizing of the Dreamers? Can comparisons be drawn between other communities under threat?
- After reviewing the East L.A. students’ demands for change, what still resonates today? Are some of these demands still relevant? Which ones? Why?

Activity: Demand Change!

Inspired by the Chicano student movement, identify what fires you up in relation to civil rights that are at risk, or under attack. Who is the authority figure or organization in charge of decision-making? What would your list of demands call for? Become agents of change by researching or creating your own petitions online with the help of an online platform such as [change.org](https://www.change.org/), and invite your friends, family and networks to spread the word.

Take the action further by organizing a day of engagement in your community through civil rights activist tools and tactics. This might be a skillshare workshop, a public protest, boycott or intervention, a social justice art making party, a discussion circle, a “zine” — a community-sourced photocopied or web publication--or another form of change activation.

Further Resources

Films:

A Class Apart: The first major film to bring to life the heroic post-World War II struggles of Mexican-Americans against the Jim Crow-style discrimination targeted against them. *A Class Apart* is built around the landmark 1951 legal case *Hernandez v. Texas*, in which an underdog band of Mexican-Americans from Texas bring a case all the way to the Supreme Court, and win.

And the Earth Did Not Swallow Him:

A Mexican boy's (Jose Alcala) family (Daniel Valdez, Rose Portillo) struggles to earn a living in 1950s America.

Cesar Chavez: Famed labor organizer and civil-rights activist Cesar Chavez (Michael Peña) is torn between his duty to his family and his commitment to securing a living wage for farm workers.

Stand and Deliver: Inspired by a true story, inner-city teacher, Jaime Escalante, inspires a classroom of rebellious remedial students to excel in mathematics.

Walkout: A teacher (Michael Peña) becomes a mentor to Chicano high-school students protesting injustices in public schools in 1968.

Books:

Chicano Movement For Beginners by Maceo Montoya and Ilan Stavans PhD

The Revolt of the Cockroach People by Oscar Zeta Acosta

Change from the Inside: My Life, the Chicano Movement, and the Story of an Era by Richard Alatorre and Marc Grossman

SOCIETY & CULTURE

La Lucha Continua!

Amplifying Chicana Feminist Voices



“The oppression suffered by Chicanas is different from that suffered by most women in this country. Because Chicanas are part of an oppressed nationality, they are subjected to the racism practiced against La Raza. Since the overwhelming majority of Chicanos are workers, Chicanas are also victims of the exploitation of the working class. But in addition, Chicanas, along with the rest of women, are relegated to an inferior position because of their sex. Thus, Raza women suffer a triple form of oppression: as members of an oppressed nationality, as workers, and as women.”

– Mirta Vidal (1971)

As electric and affecting as Oscar Zeta Acosta was in his ability to rally and create change, he was also known for dismissive and often sexist orientations towards women in the movement. He was not alone. Relegating women to the “household” roles was a common issue in the Chicano Movement — a reflection of both traditional Mexican gender values,

and the sexism embedded in United States culture. In *The Rise and Fall of the Brown Buffalo*, the filmmaker is conscientious in his inclusion of women characters, bringing often buried voices to the forefront filling in historical gaps.

Taking this learning further, The Chicana Feminist Movement was an important response to the internal discriminatory problems within the activist community. Chicana Feminism rose in the late 1960s as a response to women's domestic roles in broader Mexican and Mexican-American culture, in addition to being a specific response to women's roles in the Chicano Movement. It served as a connective tissue between the Chicano Movement and the Women's Liberation Movement, which was eurocentric and often did not address the concerns and needs of women from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. The movement was considered officially launched at the 1969 Chicano Youth Liberation Conference, where women began to assert that their voices and demanded that contributions and gender-specific concerns be included, honored, and uplifted.

Chicana Activists you should know...

Anna Nieto-Gómez was an early Chicana movement member, scholar and publisher who addressed issues such as gender and sexuality, childcare, reproductive rights, and the feminization of poverty through her work. Her entry into the movement began in 1967, when she became involved in the Mexican-American student rights movement through her time at California State University at Long Beach, where she founded the feminist Chicana newspaper, *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*. Her commitment to feminism deepened when she was elected President of the student organization el Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán. In protest of a woman representing their organization, male students created a model of Nieto-Gomez, and hung her in effigy. Nieto-Gomez went on to work in the Department of Chicano Studies at California State University, Northridge, where *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* was developed into Encuentro Femenil, the first Chicana Feminist scholarly journal.

Felicita Mendez's family was an important precursor to the Civil Rights Movements of the 1960s. After three of their children, including Felicita, were turned away from schooling for "being too dark," the Mendez family collaborated with United Latin American Citizens (LUCAC), suing four local school districts, including Westminster and Santa Ana, for segregating their children and 5,000 others. The Mendez family won the case on February 18, 1946. This effort resulted in the passage of The Anderson bill, which repealed all California school codes

mandating segregation. The Mendez v. Westminster School District case paved the way for Brown v. Board of Education in 1954.

Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa was a highly influential American writer and scholar of Chicana cultural theory, feminist theory and queer theory. Born to two fieldworkers, she followed her parent's encouragement to pursue education. After receiving her M.A., in 1977, Anzaldúa began to teach high-school English, advocate for children of migrant workers, and write and lecture at different universities. She went on to teach creative writing and literature at a number of universities, and wrote several books. Her most-known works are *This Bridge Called My Back: Writing By Radical Women of Color*, an anthology she co-edited, and her own *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* and the concept of mestizaje and the "New Mestiza."

Dolores Huerta is a prolific American labor organizer and civil rights activist who co-founded the National Farm Workers Association, which later became the United Farm Workers. Alongside Cesar Chavez, Huerta helped to organize the 1965 Delano grape strike, which led to her role as lead negotiator in the workers' contract that followed as a result. Huerta's history includes fighting for economic improvements for Latinos through helping to start the Stockton Chapter of the Community Service Organization (CSO) (1955). She set up voter registrations drives through the 1960s and co-founded the Agricultural Workers Association. Beyond organizing, Huerta's efforts in lobbying for laws that improve the lives of farmworkers garnered wins such as the 1960 bill to permit Spanish-speaking people to take the California driver's examination

in Spanish, the 1962 legislation repealing the Bracero Program, the 1963 legislation to extend the federal program Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) to California farmworkers, and the 1975 California Agricultural Labor Relations Act.

Martha P. Cotera is a librarian, writer, and activist of the Chicano Civil Rights Movement and the Chicana Feminist movement. Her efforts span a number of organizations, roles and positions. She was a founding member of TEAMS (Texans for Educational Advancement for Mexican-Americans), — a network of educators that supported the East L.A. student walkouts — and Jacinto Trevino College, which became the Juarez-Lincoln University, a college for Mexican-Americans to prepare teachers for bilingual education programs. In 1972 Cotera ran for a seat on the the board of education through the Raza Unida Party, and when marginalized by male members, she and other women established Mujeres de La Raza Unida (Women of the Raza Unida) to address issues of gender disparity within the party. Cotera also co-founded The Texas Women's Political Caucus and the non-profit Chicana Research and Learning Center in Austin, Texas. In 1975 Cotera held a special staff consultancy with the Benson Latin American Collection at the University of Texas.

Norma Alarcón is an author, professors and publisher/founder of Third Woman Press. She is a major figure in Chicana feminism. Alarcón served as a Comparative Ethnic/Indigenous Studies, Women's Studies, and Spanish professor at UC Berkeley, and is the founder and publisher of Third Woman Press. The journal began in 1979 as a measure to increase dialogue with,

and visibility of, writings by women of color and Latinas. The journal was published in six issues, each focusing on a different geographical region of the United States, before transforming into an independent press in 1987. Third Woman Press ran until 2004, publishing over thirty books and anthologies.

Gloria Arellanes is an influential political activist in the development of Chicana feminism, and is known for her involvement with the Brown Berets during the Chicano Movement. During her time as a member of the Brown Berets, Arellanes worked on building community programs and coordinated the Barrio Free Clinic, which was the Berets first effort. In 1969, Arellanes became the official clinic director; however, Arellanes left the Brown Berets due to gender inequality perpetuated by the male members. She wrote a resignation letter that outlined the reasons she, and other women, were breaking away, signing off with “Con Che!”, a nod to Che Guevara’s stance on equality among the sexes.

Sandra Cisneros is a poet, short story writer, novelist, and essayist, whose work explores the lives of the working-class. Now the recipient of numerous prestigious awards and fellowships, Cisneros was also the first female Mexican-American writer to be published by a mainstream press. Her 1989 book, *The House on Mango Street*, challenged familiar forms, and thematically addressed gender inequality and marginalization through her strong voiced twelve year old narrator, Esperanza. Cisneros is also known for other works of fiction, a memoir and poetry. She often mixes the Spanish language in with her primarily English-language texts.

Questions For Deeper Thinking:

- Why was it important for Chicana women to carve their own distinctive space within the larger Chicano Movement?
- How do we see Oscar Zeta Acosta talking to or about women in the film? Based on what you know and have seen, do you think he acknowledges women as his peers?
- Consider the term intersectionality — the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. What were some of the intersecting identities at play in the Chicana Feminist Movement? Is the concept of intersectionality still relevant today, and in what ways?
- In what ways do women still fight for visibility, equity and dignity in the United States and beyond?



Activity: Amplify Underheard Voices

There is no such thing as being “voiceless.” While every person is born with a voice, a unique expression of their original personhood, it is oppressive forces in society, both invisible and visible, who select which voices are valued, forefronted, and listened to on both local levels and the world stage. Being careful not to speak for, we can create allyship with those whose voices are trampled, overlooked, and undervalued by using our position to amplify the voices of others, and creating platforms for uplifting their messages and stories.

Unfortunately, despite the power of the movement, it is still difficult to find in-depth information about the history of Chicana Feminism online. How can you help to further their legacy, and help center their history and work? Using the biographies of the Chicana Feminists in this guide, create homages to the women featured. Draw a portrait of, write a poem about, search for a quote from, or simply write a one-line biography of the leader — and share on social media.

You might also consider centering/ amplifying a group of people you connect with, whose voices are challenged, silenced or rendered invisible by people in power — women, people of color, migrant communities, the economically disadvantaged, people with disabilities, imprisoned people, etc.





VINTAGE 1970 PHOTOGRAPH OF CHICANA BROWN BERETS AT A DEMONSTRATION IN EAST LOS ANGELES, FROM LA RAZA MAGAZINE, VOL. 1 NO. 4. PHOTO: RAUL RUIZ.

Further Resources:

Films:

A Crushing Love, Sylvia Morales' sequel to her groundbreaking history of Chicana women, *Chicana* (1979), honors the achievements of five Latina activists—labor organizer/farm worker leader Dolores Huerta, author/educator Elizabeth “Betita” Martinez, writer/playwright/educator Cherrie Moraga, civil rights advocate Alicia Escalante, and historian/writer Martha Cotera—and considers how these single mothers managed to be parents and effect broad-based social change at the same time.

Chicana traces the history of Chicana and Mexican women from pre-Columbian times to the present. It covers women's role in Aztec society, their participation in the 1810 struggle for Mexican independence, their involvement in the US labor strikes in 1872, their contributions to the 1910 Mexican revolution, and their leadership in contemporary civil rights causes. Using murals, engravings and historical footage, *CHICANA* shows how women, despite their poverty, have become an active and vocal part of the political and work life in both Mexico and the United States.

Real Women Have Curves is a humorous and warm-hearted look at a Mexican-American teenage girl coming of age in a boiling cauldron of cultural

expectations, class constrictions, family duty, and her own personal aspirations.

Writings:

Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza, Gloria Anzaldúa

¡Chicana Power!: Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement (Chicana Matters) by Maylei Blackwell

The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros

This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color, edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa

From Jim Crow to Jay-Z, Race, Rap and the Performance of Masculinity by Miles White

The Macho Paradox by Jackson Katz

The Will To Change: Men, Masculinity and Love by bell hooks

“How the Myth of the Artistic Genius Excuses the Abuse of Women” by Amanda Hess in the New York Times <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/10/arts/sexual-harassment-art-hollywood.html>

Online:

Chicana Por Mi Raza Memory Collective — a hybrid archive, museum, and digital curriculum organized around capturing important Chicana and Latina voices from the long Civil Rights Era.



OPED

A Letter from Dorinda Moreno to Oscar Acosta

Organizer, Activist, and Contemporary to Oscar Acosta.

CONTESTACION DE AMOR, PARA UN DYING BUFFALO.

Llore lagrimas de pena. Felt your excruciating dolores. Tu desesperacion. Your immense ego. I loved you for telling agonising truths. Hated you for flaunting them. Respected your gall to record them. But, I cannot call it courage, for your rebellion, rough and ragged, aggravates your own self-destruction. Also, it is a perpetuating of the image, derogatory to los hombres, characterized always as self-indulgent, super-sexed, maniacs, using and abusing women. Este stereotipo deberia de ser denunciado por toda la Raza!

Your electric damnations lash out blindlessly, hot words of rage, daring annoyances, caring not whom you offend. Wanting to shock. You are a dynamic, and arrogant, instigator of controversy. You display the absurd. Laugh at a system which mutilates us. Mocking the status quo with your courtroom and bedroom antics. You beat the man at his own game, but seem to get saturated by the pressures brought about with your participation. You explode a lava aftermath. An ulcer ridden red rage!

Be it over-confidence, or weakness, your energies are super-charged with charisma! You are Melvin Belli, Orson Welles, Lenny Bruce, all rolled into one. In size as in greatness. A fanatic/phenomenon. A tormented/demented, be/honcho/hell-raising cabron with a pen and a law degree!

You are a man with many problems. Your uncontrollable passions are outlined in print before us; you/they are unconquerable. You will die a sexist, enjoying it. Fat. Crazy. Brilliant. You expose the inconsistencies of the government, the church, and your inability to relate to Raza mujeres, or any woman in other than sexual terms. An example is your impression of Dr. White/Jean of Arc, "who tries to be a woman". You, of course, want to "show" her how! Another, the bedding of Jeanne/san-maid/Blackjurer, breaking her down before the 11th hour, by which time the verdict will be reached. Your climatic rendezvous at her apartment, won you a legal victory in the St. Basil's trials. With Elena/Verdugo/Greenrider, however, you were very quiet. Could it be that with her you felt the most private? Was this sexual relationship too delicate to be shared with your readers...she being an activist...a Chicana activist? Or could she not be conquered - contained, attained?

Most painful, therefore of more intensity, you expose yourself, the traumatic life of Mr. Color Cafe. You cut out your heart as in ancient Aztec sacrifice, for all to dissect...to dismember your carcass with criticism and gut reaction. You generate a negative response from many Chicanas; sometimes over-emotional and often strongly exaggerated, but, necessary in order to reconcile the differences between us.

Every Chicana has the strength of Ser Juana. Her 'ammunition', with which to renunciate the errors of the double standard. A more realistic interaction between mujeres y hombres must be attained. Your repudiation is further underscored by your enchantment with gallina/feathers/ovaries, (in your eyes), the epitome of femininity, (enhances your masculinity). We are thinking beings!

You claim to love las mujeres de Aztlan, but fail to demonstrate this, not achieve their respect and rapport. Que lastima. We both loose. El hombre y la mujer. You cut yourself open - expose many conflicts, but create deeper chasms where instead bridges are needed.

Ay! As Cantinflas mimics the proletario, with his funny/SOB!/pantomimas...you exploit, with Tom Sawyer innocence, the buffalo! Whiplash! As this great beast name-sake, could you not live up to this sacred symbol of Indian survival....of Alcatraz? This is a harsh but crucial question. The animal is 'religious' in its muscular magnificence, its sagging endurance. Your treatment is alarming. Brutal. We as mujeres del movimiento do not expect our revolucionarios to be saints; we want our men to be of fires and erupting volcanoes. You portray this poignantly, but use your hate/hurts/hang-ups against us. About your exploits; within la causa, we profess to emulate and seek the ideal. The ideal is more, a higher place. Chauvinism is yesterday's slave/master, pimp/whore, sado-maso, mentality. Fucking is real, but loving is ideal. Loving WITH fucking as EQUALS is highest. But then, all these words are not but rhetorical for its happening to you is the ultimate truth. You/I/We all need this kind of cariño, and look for its sincerity throughout the whole of our lives. I guess what I'm trying to say is, don't get lost in the trips, the games. Sublimate your anger with pride and your ability to overcome the human traumas of life. Create a serenity out of what you have learned from your angustias.

As a liver of experiences you are an insatiable genius for sensationalism. As a liver of life you are ruthless. As a recorder you are unscrupulous. But, as a writer, you fall short of your potential. You are 'almost' profound. I feel that your distorted machista view gets in the way of your victories. Your sexism/sadism overwhelms. Saddens rather than offends. Your atrocities overpower your meaningful contributions. Your parrandas sound like a boy's fantasies. A long midsummers night scream.

Your work is important. In spite of all choques y contradicciones, de que es ser 'revolucionario'; you do have something to say! Y lo gritas con el coraje, la rabia del dying. . .dying buffalo. You reported it con el espirita, la alma herida, en las primeras cien paginas de Revolt of The Coorooch People. The exhumation del cuerpo de Robert Fernandez. With compasion I felt the anguish written in the blood splattered pages, now mixed with my tears. I felt you, la familia, La Raza's llanto, the bitter tears of grief...azargura. You

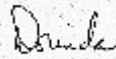
The death of one who dies before his time, brings about questions otherwise not asked. Thus such a death gives deeper meaning to the lives of those left behind. Martyrs para desper^{ar} la gente. We, La Raza, demand answers. You, Chicano attorney, are responsible to litigate successfully the conflicts with which we are faced. Your bravura/bastardness is exercised in ritualized legal entanglements. Your sensitivity, and your rencor wells up and pours out into the pages.

Si! Viva El Zeta! I say it for myself and for mi Raza. There is none who could not feel the same after having read your works. There is none who would not share the burden of remorse which nourishes our commitment toward el pueblo sufrido...but, me hermano, in our involvement, we must preserve dignity, una humildad, una etica grande. Asi, may Tlaloc rain on you, and wash your dirty underwear, bringing to you - - Mr. Brown, Senor Abogado de Cafe, Welles/Balli/Bruce, /Buff/, Oski-wa-wa, Oscar Zeta Acosta, and all the names you are known by - a rebirth. . . so that the thundering hooves of the buffalo are heard through your works - and words!

You are our macho/hero/leader. We can teach each other, learn together, develop together. Con mucho cariño, I hope this feedback hace algo. Porque, I was astounded by you, rather than your message. Y el mensaje del escritor, la responsabilidad debería de ser otherwise. Let your writing speak for you. Don't speak of yourself tanto. Como lo dijo Lopitos, "LA VIDA NO ES LA QUE VIVIMOS, LA VIDA ES EL HONOR, Y EL RECUERDO. . ." X

I will remember you, mi guerrillero del barrio, at the cantina Progreso, when almost you got arrested, and after, over cervezas, listening to mariachis, especially when your big hands reached for me, to dance. You exuded a spirit not possessed so much with self; having fought the battles, you held inside your soul the knowledge of facing those experiences, and coming out of them, un hombre. So tender. Gentle. I caught a glimpse. Share it with us more. You have much to give La Causa Chicana. Y gracias for your asking me to share my thoughts with you. The raking through the coals of feedback is where much of my own growing has taken place. VIVA LA REVOLUCION!

Tu compañera de lucha



Dorinda Moreno
UNA CUCARACHA

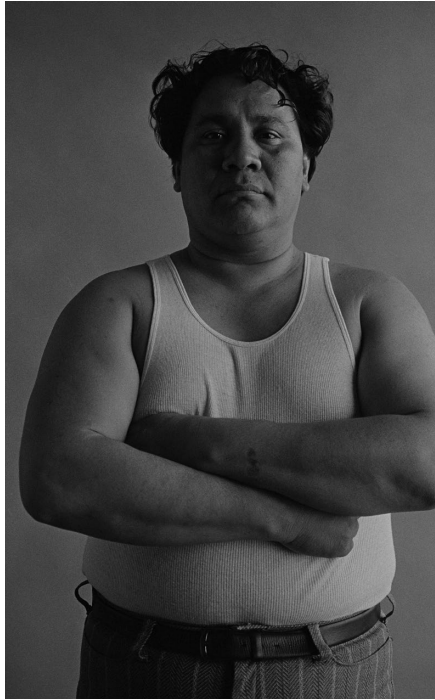
Questions For Deeper Thinking:

- How do you think Moreno reconciles Acosta's contributions and shortcomings? Is there room for both in a movement?
- What current artists/leaders do we admire who also have troublesome aspects of their behavior? Do we ignore or excuse their contributions with their problematic actions?
- What aspects of masculinity does Acosta embody in an empowered way? What aspects are toxic?
- After watching the film, are there root causes in Acosta's history that might have contributed to the negative aspects of his character?
- What would happen to Acosta in today's #MeToo climate? How might he be held accountable for his crossed boundaries? What consequences might he face?

Activity: Open Dialogue, Connecting to #MeToo

Using Acosta's story as a jumping off point, gather a discussion group to grapple with the issues of toxic masculinity in modern society. As the #MeToo movement has shown us, bringing to light problematic, and often abusive behaviors of men in power, is a crucial first step to opening room for change. What happens next? Involve your community in critical dialogue by identifying issues, brainstorming restorative solutions, and creating commitments to making change on personal and interpersonal levels.

PHOTO JOURNALISM:



OSCAR ZETA ACOSTA, 1971,
PHOTO: ANNIE LEIBOVITZ



OSCAR ZETA ACOSTA (FAR RIGHT), COURTESY OF THE
CALIFORNIA ETHNIC & MULTICULTURAL ARCHIVES (EMA),
UC SANTA BARBARA LIBRARY



HUNTER S. THOMPSON & OSCAR ZETA ACOSTA, LAS VEGAS,
CEASAR'S PALACE, APRIL 1971, PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN

OSCAR ZETA ACOSTA RILES COURT ROOM WITH FLOWERS AND FLAMBOYANCE

Fiery, controversial, and flamboyant, Oscar Zeta Acosta's approach in the courtroom was unconventional, to put it mildly. While these tactics sometimes caused more harm than good, in other ways, his risk-taking helped create impressive advances in fighting legal discrimination against Mexican-Americans. Tornadoing in with a flower power briefcase, loud ties under his suits, and sometimes even on what he considered mind-expanding psychedelic drugs, Acosta was a force to be reckoned with.

Some of his tactics, accomplishments, and controversies:

- 1968, moved to East Los Angeles to join the Chicano Movement and defend Chicano activists in his role as an attorney.
- Represented high-profile civil rights cases such as the Chicano 13 and the students who participated in the East L.A. walkouts, as well as
- Rodolfo Gonzales and members of the Brown Berets and other residents of the area.
- Used controversial defenses that sparked resentment from the LAPD — was often followed and harrassed by law enforcement.
- Proved a pattern of discrimination against Mexican-Americans by subpoenaing every member of the Los Angeles County grand jury. He found that 178 judges had never nominated a person with a Spanish sounding surname.
- Used illegal psychedelic drugs while working in the courtroom, as he felt they “expanded his mind.”
- He was linked to the Chicano Liberation Front, an underground organization known for aggressive tactics such as bombings.
- Set a judge's lawn on fire after being held in contempt of court.
- In 1970, ran for Sheriff of Los Angeles County, vowing to do away with the Sheriff's Department.
- Used his training as a preacher to rally the people.
- Known for flamboyant style, he had an Aztec god on his business card and a flower-print attaché case adorned with a Chicano Power sticker.
- Wrote two books about his own life *Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo*, and *The Revolt of the Cockroach People* about the Chicano Movement.



ATTORNEY OSCAR ZETA ACOSTA AT A DEMONSTRATION
IN DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES, CIRCA 1970
PHOTO: RAUL RUIZ

Activity: Spot a Buffalo In the Wild

Who do you know that embodies the spirit of Acosta — a larger-than-life personality with the ability to create change?

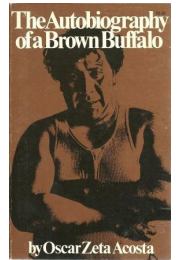
Calling all photojournalists to capture an image of the buffalo in its native habitat. You might spot a famous activist, such as Colin Kaepernick kneeling during the NFL's pledge of allegiance in protest of police brutality, or Emma Gonzalez a student speaking out following the Parkland School shooting. Perhaps

you choose to highlight the music of a politically-minded singer, or honor your uncle who knows how to rally the family together to serve meals to the homeless.

After capturing an image of these buffalo's post an image with a caption on social media and tag **#brownbuffalo** **#oscarzetaacosta** **#returnofzeta**

Further Resources:


Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo
by Oscar Zeta Acosta



Questions For Deeper Thinking:


- What were Oscar Zeta Acosta's powerful and useful contributions to the Chicano Movement?
- What can we learn from Acosta and co-opt as possible tactics in current day social justice movements?
- What actions might you rewrite or redirect if you were able to go back in history and advise Acosta?
- Why do you think Acosta named himself Brown Buffalo and his people as cockroaches? What characteristics are called up with this symbolism?
- Do you believe Acosta would have been more or less successful as a lawyer if he presented himself in the more conservative and traditional demeanor as an attorney in the courtroom?

**“The fucking book is true.
That is the weird point that
seems to escape all of you.”**



Oscar Zeta Acosta is a “Chicano by ancestry and a Brown Buffalo by choice.” He’s also been a Samoan attorney and creator of Gonzo Journalism, an Aztec, Mongol prince, Baptist missionary and a dangerous man. You’ve read about him in *Fear and*

Loathing in Las Vegas. Now Dr. Gonzo tells his own story, from the *barrio* to the psychedelic world of San Francisco. Oscar Zeta Acosta lives one of the classic experiences of our time and tells about it in a voice unique to American life and literature.



Credits

COVER PHOTO: Attorney Oscar Zeta Acosta at a demonstration in downtown Los Angeles. Courtesy of Oscar Castillo.

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