Xicanacimiento, Life-giving Sonics of Critical Consciousness

Sounding Out! Authors

Blog post published August 21, 2023 in *Sounding Out!*
https://doi.org/10.59350/51hsh-qre94

Abstract

This series listens to the political, gendered, queer(ed), racial engagements and class entanglements involved in proclaiming out loud: La-TIN-x. ChI-ca-NA. La-TI-ne. ChI-ca-n-@.

Keywords

Music (Subfield), Latin American and Latino Studies (Topic), Cultural Studies (Subfield), American Studies, Article, Chican@/Latin@ Studies, Class, Diasporic Sound



Recommended citation

Authors, S. O. (2023, August 21). Xicanacimiento, Life-giving Sonics of Critical Consciousness. *Sounding Out!*. https://doi.org/10.59350/51hsh-qre94

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This series listens to the political, gendered, queer(ed), racial engagements and class entanglements involved in proclaiming out loud: La-TIN-x. ChI-ca-NA. La-TI-ne. ChI-ca-n-@. Xi-can-x. Funded by an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation as part of the Crossing Latinidades Humanities Research Initiative, the Latinx Sound Cultures Studies Working Group critically considers the role of sound and listening in our formation as political subjects. Through both a comparative and cross-regional lens, we invite Latinx Sound Scholars to join us as we dialogue about our place within the larger fields of Chicanx/Latinx Studies and Sound Studies. We are delighted to publish our initial musings with Sounding Out!, *a forum that has long prioritized sound from a queered, racial, working-class and "always-from-below" epistemological standpoint.* ***—Ed. Dolores Inés Casillas***

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In the past year, we, Esther, a first-generation *profesora* in Latinx culture and feminist studies in Chicago and Kristian, an L.A-raised Xicano *de letras* pursuing a doctoral degree in Santa Barbara, engaged in a multi-synchronous dialogue on the life-giving sonics of our critical consciousness. This *Xicanacimiento*, as theorized in Kristian's current writing and in conversation with Irene

Vasquez and an emerging generation of Chicana/o scholar-educators, refers to the incomplete process and life-giving knowledge forged in the socio-political and pedagogical activities of Chicanx worldmaking.

SO! writers note music listening as a powerful site for critical thinking. Erika Giselda Abad, for instance, teaches the *Hamilton Mixtape* so her Latinx students may "hear [their stories] from people who look and sound like them." We reflected on the pedagogical implications of our music listening that informed our coming-into-critical consciousness. In this *diálogo*, we developed a playlist through experimenting with our sonic memories through the poetics of our *rasquache* sensibilities. Gloria Anzaldúa suggests something similar with notes from Los Tigres, Silvio Rodriguez, and others in *La Frontera*. Our auditory imaginary echoes our evolving *conocimiento* toward spiritual activism.

Here, we offer our musical resonances as shaped by our gendered, place-based, and generational Xicanx experiences as a pathway to hear the auditory dimensions of Xicanacimiento. Our listening is thus counter-hegemonic or a "brown form of listening" as suggested by D. Inés Casillas, "a form of radical self-love, a sonic eff-you, and a means of taking up uninvited (white) space," when this listening evolves critical anti-imperialist and feminist consciousness that hears 500 years of *opresión y resistencia*.

Diverging from the mixtape genre, our Xicanacimiento playlist seeks to convey something beyond connection and emotion towards a sustained affective state. Instead of a sonic moment, we hear a sonic stream; a subaltern auditory repertoire that is multi-directional and open to expansion by any and all interpellated Xicanx ears.

Kristian: Tuning-in to Xicanacimiento is a symbiosis of feeling and listening to La Chicanada from Califas to all corners of Aztlán unearthed. I was raised to the sounds of my father's rancheras played in his truck and the hip-thumping rhythms of bachata and reggaetón played in my mother's kitchen after a workday.

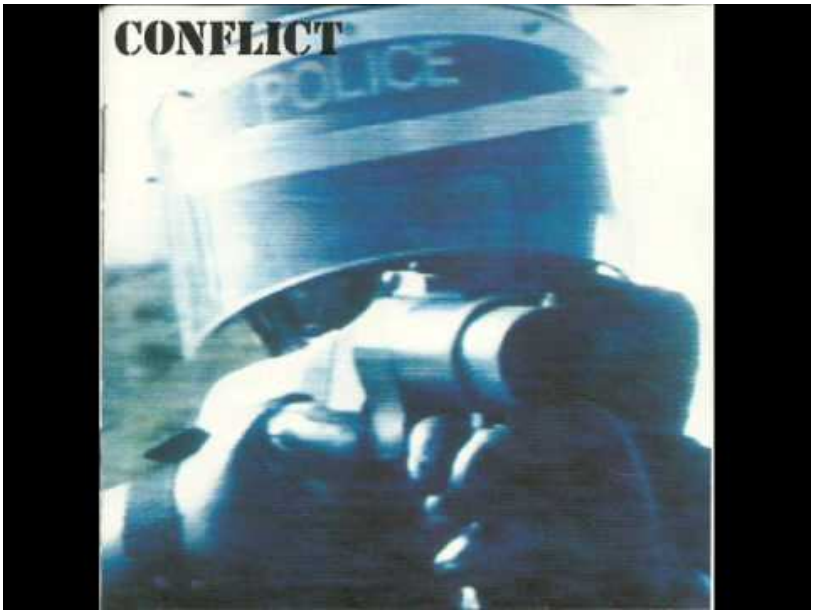


https://youtu.be/VZtbAam5aMY

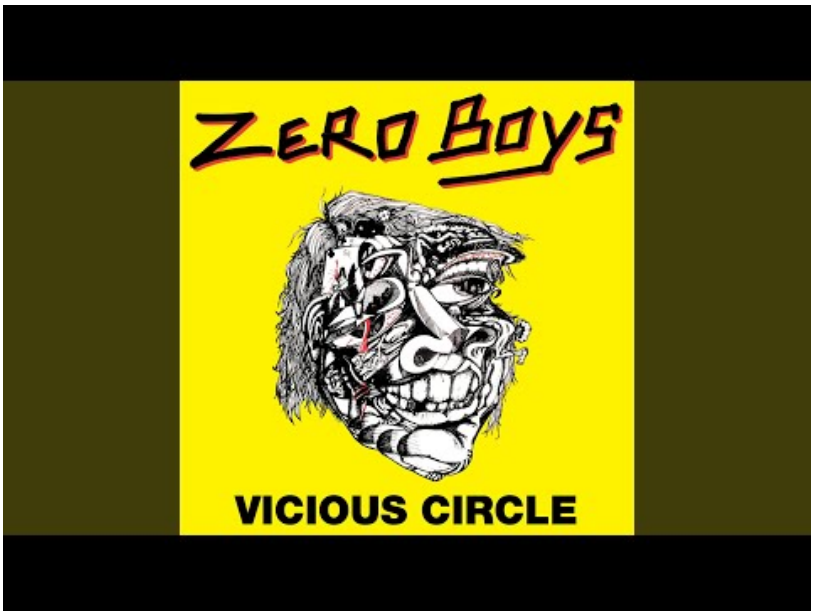


https://youtu.be/SEjw5rdyvVg

Yet, my love for UK anarcho-punk and US hardcore punk developed in defiance of public schooling and of a disaffected civil society. As a youth during the Great Recession, a future without higher education meant prison, the military, death by overdose, or the eternal damnation of working the Los Angeles service industry. I thrashed in sound; numbing my ears with noise, bruising in the mosh pit; bearing witness to minors as mota and alcohol addicts; pierced by the cries of police sirens breaking up our communion.



https://youtu.be/l_woUmie8uk

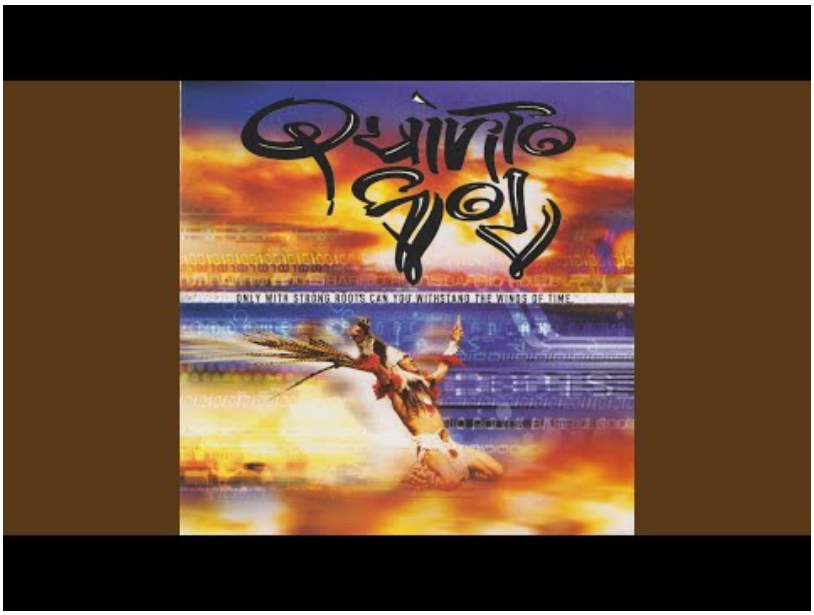


https://youtu.be/lqT3JcIgDj0

I found refuge in Xicanacimiento as a community college student and as a transfer at UC Los Angeles. I came into Xicanx consciousness by studying Mexican anarchists and Chicanx organizing. As a MEChistA, I came to listen to the ways local elders, youth, organizers, and agents of social transformation in Los Angeles identified their struggle with land, life, and spirit. My primer to social movements gave me language, and it was MEChistAs who offered me a new soundtrack against the escapism of the Los Angeles punk scene. The resonances of marchas, fiestas, and the songs of *danza azteca* oriented me into a new modality of listening. Xicanacimiento was the sonic web of these social and cultural practices, rooted in my auditory encounters with the verses of Quetzal, the biting guitars of Subsistencia, the rhythms of Quinto Sol, and the lyrical narratives of Aztlán Underground. The life-giving *sonics* of Xicanacimiento grazed against my wounded sonics of broken glass, nos tanks, drunk noise, and the cacophonous affair of a raided gig as intoxicated Latinx youth disperse into the discordant symphonies of the urban soundscape.



https://youtu.be/1oWkEWwiBIY



https://youtu.be/6NhGKDLhOOI



https://youtu.be/2U7gvQfLTgw

Esther: I listen as a *campesina migrante translocada* from Jalisco to California, Texas, and Illinois. Some twenty years ago, while attending Cal State *en el Valle Central,* I heard Xicanacimiento as *concientización;* an evolving awareness about *la lucha obrera,* the open veins of *Latinoamerica* and my place within the interlocked hierarchies of race, class, and gender in US society. With Chicanx and brigadista musics I felt connected to *la lucha* and acquired the language to name capitalist imperialism rooted in white supremacy as the enemy of humanity and Pachamama.

My early sonic memories include the sequence of my Alien number, the urging tones of *radio hablada* discussing Prop 187 (insisting we were aliens), Prop 227 (banning our language), and reports of Minuteman harassing *la raza.* I was immersed in listening; my mother's *sobremesa*, my sister's Temerarios at 5 am, Selena on the school bus, and 90s hits-from Chalino to Morrissey-on Columbia House CDs I traded with my older brother. Among other *norteñas,* La Jaula de Oro, the theme song of the diaspora of *papás mexicanos*, played at random-at the *marketa*, *en los files*, in

passing cars, and so on…- to remind us of my father's *sacrificio en el norte* caring for 500 dairy cows, six days a week, in two 5-hour shifts, to provide us *el sueño americano.*



https://youtu.be/y3N6YMYOYk8



https://youtu.be/kPa9YoPZALs



https://youtu.be/SpjdbiGIEYE



https://youtu.be/84SSCUhpa7U

I studied music in college, playing jazz and orchestral bass until the racist and sexual harassment targeting my young Latina body turned me away. I left the scene but continued my communion with music through library loans, traveling vendors, and trips to Amoeba. In reggae and *canción nueva* I found *otros mundos posibles in the* upbeat, *cariño* in 2 over 3, and the poetics of black and brown history; *manos abiertas, muchas manos.*

https://youtu.be/70VJWpzrYJI



https://youtu.be/RK0fLaxOBHI



https://youtu.be/2M7fjPg8gM8

In 2002, “El Rasquache Rudo” a poet from the Rudo Revolutionary Front brought me sounds from Azltán; the UFW unity clap rallying in Modesto, a recitation by José Montoya in Sacramento, and brigadista music synergizing the 1492 quincentennial resistance with the uprising of the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN). As Omar Marquez argues, the Zapatista uprising shifted Chicano ideology to speak from the position of a living indigenous present; still loud in the work of Xicanx activists like Flor Martinez. Into the 21st century, Aztlán Underground, Manu Chao, and Todos Tus Muertos, among others, soundtracked our protests against the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.



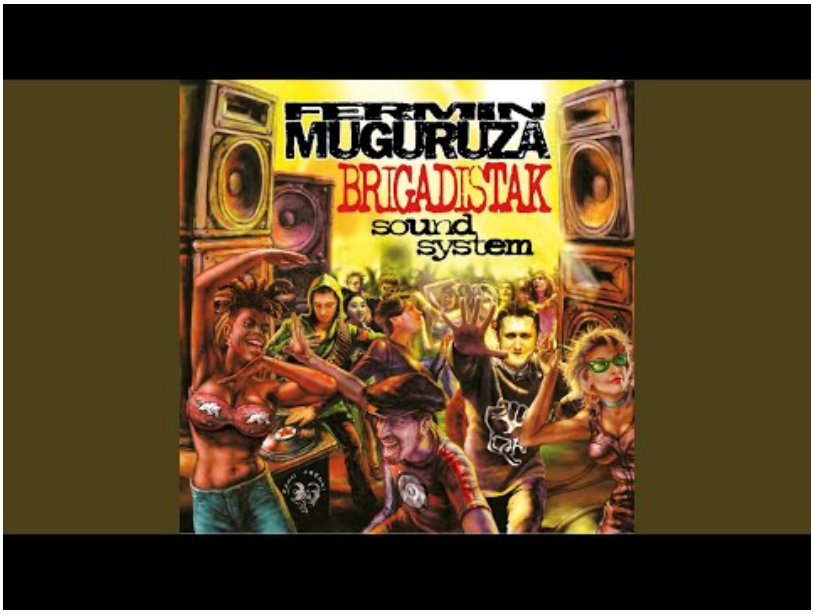
https://youtu.be/W1UQi3M-T9o



https://youtu.be/HsYLNgcqvjo



https://youtu.be/TyA-oz7lSrc

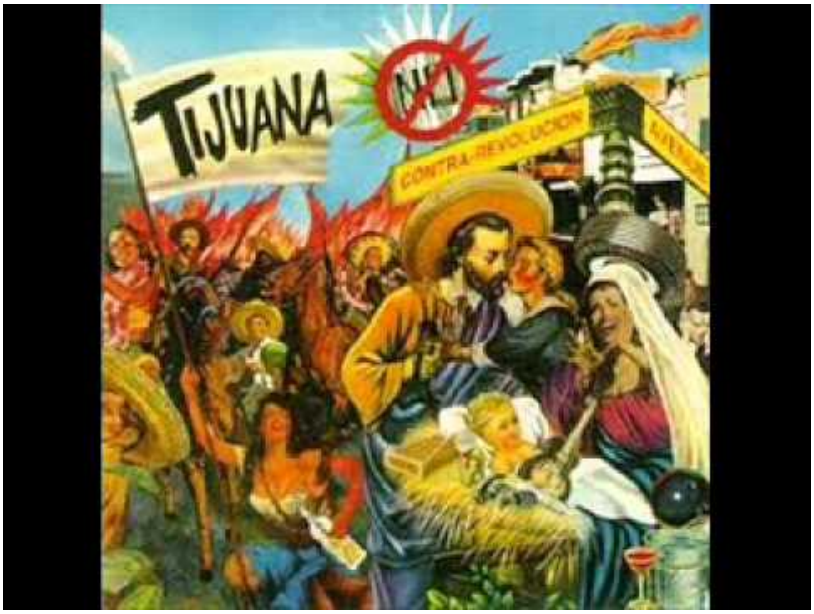


https://youtu.be/D5O_vypFmaY

Julieta Venegas's distinctly vulnerable voice over the controlled chaos of ska and Martha Gonzalez's tension over the wall of sound that is Quetzal, was transformative as I heard In Lak'ech; hearing in their voices possibilities for my Chicana existence.



https://youtu.be/dgFQJzESi9c



https://youtu.be/LOxckiTN3r4

Some of these selections anchor my first-year lectures at the University of Illinois in Chicago, where most of my students are working-class Latinx and Black. I do this with the intention of "opening affective pathways toward Xicanacimiento" as Kristian offered, and to insist on the point that Latina/o/x Studies is to be a critical, anti-hegemonic, subaltern field of study that hears a history from *el mundo zurdo*.



https://youtu.be/3jlO5RqXFLM



https://youtu.be/n1I-oJj_iNs

Outro:

In a gesture to deconstruct the term Xicanacimiento, one might think of the words "renacimiento"and "conocimiento." What might emerge is a "regenerative force" and "collective knowledges" in consideration to how we listen, what resonances are made, and what sounds we inhabit when Xicanacimiento is invoked or felt as sound. Tuning into this auditory imagination guides the listener to a myriad and select decisions of what constitutes the Xicanx resonance for the local sonic geographies and the soundscapes which emerge from music. This curated sonic experience is one where voice, instrument, memory, and affect intersect.

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Featured Image by Jennifer Lynn Stoever

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Esther Díaz Martín *is a researcher and educator in the Latin American and Latino Studies and the Gender and Women's Studies program at the University of Illinois in Chicago. At present, she is working towards finishing her manuscript* Latina Radiophonic Feminism(s) *which seeks to amplify the acoustic work of popular feminism in contemporary Spanish-language radio and Latina podcasting.*

Kristian E. Vasquez *is a Xicano writer, poet, and zinester born and raised in Los Angeles, California currently pursuing a doctoral degree in Chicana and Chicano Studies at UC Santa Barbara. His research on the affects, sounds, and semiotics of La Xicanada expands the concept of Xicanacimiento, centering the affective force of expressive culture.*

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