The Ever-Changing Legacy of Ruben Salazar:
A Reflection of Remembrance in East LA

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Figure 1. "Memorial for Ruben". Daniel Gonzalez, 2013 (Print).

Ruben Salazar, who remains the most successful and renowned Mexican American reporter in America, died on 29 August 1970 at the Silver Dollar Bar and Café in East Los Angeles. Killed by an LA Sheriff's deputy who, without warning, fired an eight-inch tear-gas projectile that struck Salazar in the head, Salazar became synonymous with the Chicano community he had been reporting on for the *Los Angeles Times*. [1] Salazar also emerged as a prominent figure to the Chicano Movement, in part because of the injustice surrounding his death. While the mysterious and unanswered questions associated with his death are the subject of several conspiracy theories, this paper instead examines how Ruben Salazar has been remembered.[2] Drawing on primary sources that include editorials, news articles, press releases, and the recent documentary by Phillip Rodriguez, this paper argues that the legacy of Ruben Salazar was created and then used by activists, journalists, and scholars to pursue their own agendas in East LA, the greater Chicano community, and to a lesser extent the nation, creating a multifaceted memorial of Salazar's life and work. Salazar's legacy was initially created by Chicano activists immediately following his death to strengthen the Chicano Movement and to lend it legitimacy. Another aspect of remembrance was shaped by journalists who used Salazar's memory to call for more diversity in journalism and in academia to promote community engagement. However, the most striking aspect about this multi-layered public remembrance is how it conflicts with the private memory created by his wife, Sally Salazar, who has publicly stated that Salazar was no icon, but a reporter with moderate views that did not completely align with the Chicano movement. In spite of these contradictions, what is most significant about analyzing Salazar's legacy is that it

[1] Charles Powers, and Jeff Perlman. "One Dead, Forty Killed in East LA Riot." *Los Angeles Times*, August 30, 1970, Sunday ed., sec. A. (accessed November 3, 2015).
[2] "The Ruben Salazar Files." *Los Angeles Times*, August 12, 2010 (accessed February 10, 2016). Unanswered questions about Salazar's death and lack of official action against the deputy who killed him, has continued to cloud how Salazar has been remembered.

reveals his relevance to Chicanos, to the East LA community, to the world of journalism and academia, and to the nation as a whole.

To truly comprehend the significance of Salazar, it is necessary to consider how the collective memory of Salazar grew out of the Chicano movement of the 1970s. The emergence of cultural nationalism developed from the strong desire to denounce assimilation and instead advance a "cultural nationalist agenda", resulting in activists organizing, and focusing on issues that were directly affecting the community.[3] The Mexican community of East LA began to develop and cultivate their own identity, and address concerns within their neighborhood, specifically issues such as police brutality and the disproportionate number of Chicano soldiers dying in the Vietnam War.[4] This political awakening revealed what was at stake for the Mexicans in East LA and set into motion a push toward radical protests and demonstrations.

Recognizing the lack of media coverage, Salazar's articles for the *L.A. Times* exemplify his efforts to present the Chicano community along with issues arising in East LA to the broader Anglo community. Articles such as, "The Wetback Issue Has More Than One Side," and "Chicano V. Traditionalists," published months before his death, tried to bring transparency to the Chicano Movement and the issues they mobilized against by writing to Anglo readers.[56] Ultimately it was his articles, and where he was killed, in East LA following a Chicano Moratorium march, that forever connected Salazar to the Chicano movement and its fallout. This is important to remember when considering how the collective memory of this community has constructed Salazar's legacy.[7]

A Martyr For The Chicano People

Salazar's status as a hero in the collective memory of many East LA residents stems from Chicano activists continued focus on Salazar as a martyr for the Chicano movement. By associating Salazar with the Chicano movement, Chicano activists successfully molded Salazar into a martyr, pitted against police brutality at the hands of LA County sheriffs and a victim of the unjust treatment of minorities by the white establishment. Activists accomplished this first aspect of Salazar's legacy by tying the brutality of the riots and violence that ensued during the Chicano Moratorium to Salazar's death. As a result, Salazar became a hero for Chicanos in East LA, an image that has not only persisted, but remains the strongest facet of his legacy.

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[3] Bruce J Schulman. "E Pluribus Plures," *In The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics*, (New York: Free Press, 2001), pg. 64. For Mexicans in East LA, growing Chicano nationalism was directed at the plight of the urban Mexican community who were disillusioned by conventional politics and polices that in no way had been for their benefit.

[4] Lorena Oropeza. "Antiwar Aztlán: The Chicano Movement Opposes U.S. Intervention in Vietnam." In Brenda Gayle Plummer, ed., *Window on Freedom, Race, Civil Rights, and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1988* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), pg. 216. For Chicanos, their protests against the Vietnam War allowed them to reevaluate their place within America, and consequently become conscious of how some of their longstanding ideals about military service and their identification as American citizens simply weren't true.

[5] Ruben Salazar. "The Wetback Issue Has More Than One Side*," Los Angeles Times* (1923-Current File), April 24, 1970 (accessed October 15, 2015).

[6] Ruben Salazar. "Chicano V. Traditionalists," *Los Angeles Times* (1923-Current File), March 06, 1970 (accessed October 15, 2015).

[7]Jacquelyn Dowd Hall. "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past." The Journal of American History 91, no. 4 (2005): 1233-263, pg. 1235 (accessed December 5, 2015) doi:http://www.jstor.org/stable/3660172. This perspective of Salazar is similar to Hall's, which considered how the narrative of the civil rights has been distorted by, "the New Right bent on reversing its gains."

The newspaper *La Raza*, a small publication out of Lincoln Heights that produced dual language articles, and would eventually evolve into a national magazine[8], successfully connected Salazar to both the riots and the overarching issues of the Chicano movement. The September 1970 issue was dedicated entirely to the fallout of the Moratorium march and the violence that preceded it. The article entitled, "Laguna Park Why?" included a vivid retelling of what transpired on that day and how this violence escalated to the killing of Salazar:

> The park suddenly became a contested battlefield, in which one army had bottles, rocks, and sticks and the other had clubs, guns, and tear gas missiles that could pierce through stucco-walled buildings. After it was all over, everywhere all one could see was the questioning expressions on brown faces: What happened and Why? Why? Why?[9]

This depiction of the melee also included the brutality that carried into the Silver Dollar Bar where Salazar was killed later that day.[10] It was this coverage by La Raza, known for helping establish the Chicano identity, that spread throughout the East LA community in the days and weeks following Salazar's death; with it, Salazar's legacy and its connection to the Chicano Movement was created.[11]

Mobilization by activists to claim Salazar's memory was also evident during his funeral. While Salazar's family and friends were eulogizing him during burial services in early September 1970, Chicano activists were outside the church passing out pamphlets for a memorial march in his honor.[12] Politicization of his death continued, with yearly marches in the streets of East LA. An *L.A. Times* article that detailed the ninth annual march in 1979 described participants carrying signs that said, "Stop police attacks on La Raza", and "Self-Determination"; with participants arguing the posters were necessary because they felt their lives had not improved since Salazar's death.[13] Chicano activists continually reinforced Salazar's connection to the Chicano movement, which ultimately led to his image as a Chicano activist that became collectively accepted by most in the community.[14]

Moreover, the mystery associated with Salazar's death resonated with Mexican Americans, and further supported activists' assertion of Salazar's martyr status.[15] Chicano activists' constant emphasis on Salazar's death and their villainization of LA county sheriffs was used as proof of social injustice. As a result, Salazar become a folk hero. This aspect of his remembrance, put Salazar, with the likes of Emiliano Zapata, Pancho Villa, and Cesar Chavez,

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[8] Steve Saldivar, "The Local Newspaper That Helped Shape a Chicano Identity," *The Getty Iris*, May 15, 2015 (accessed February 28, 2016) http://blogs.getty.edu/iris/the-local-newspaper-that-helped-shape-a-chicano-identity/.

[9] Patricia Borjon and Raul Ruiz, eds. "Laguna Park Why*?" LA RAZA Magazine,* September 5, 1970, 2-3.

[10] Ibid., 2-3.

[11] Steve Saldivar, "The Local Newspaper That Helped Shape a Chicano Identity," *The Getty Iris*, May 15, 2015 (accessed February 28, 2016). http://blogs.getty.edu/iris/the-local-newspaper-that-helped-shape-a-chicano-identity/.

[12] Dorothy Townsend, "Slain Newsman Salazar Lauded at Funeral as Seeker of Peace." *Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File),* Sep 03, 1970 (accessed October 3, 2015) http://search.proquest.com/docview/156476490?accountid=10352.

[13] Jerry Cohen, "March Marks Death of Latino Newsman," *Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File),* Sep 02, 1979, http://search.proquest.com/docview/159007986?accountid=10352.

[14] Ruben Salazar and Mario T. A., *Border Correspondent Selected Writings, 1955-1970*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1995), 35.

[15] "The Ruben Salazar Files," *Los Angeles Times*, August 12, 2010 (accessed February 10, 2016) http://articles.latimes.com/2010/aug/12/opinion/la-ed-salazar-20100812.

often seen together in the many murals around East LA.[16] Salazar's inclusion with these popular Mexican and Chicano heroes was not coincidental.[17] According to Phil Montez, then Western Regional Director for the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and Salazar's friend, "[The Chicano Movement] needed a martyr – maybe because they weren't serious enough, those so-called revolutionaries, to die for the struggle and Ruben was convenient, a stand-in for what they themselves were not doing."[18] Thus Chicano activists focused on the injustice surrounding Salazar's death, to assert their position in the East LA community.[19] Their growing status in the community following the violence of the Chicano Moratorium allowed activists to continue to tie Salazar's death to their own agenda. The decades that followed Salazar's death saw countless articles and marches supported by activists that called for transparency and accountability regarding Salazar's murder.[20]

While the radicalism of the 1970s Chicano movement has lessened over time, older activists have continued to perpetuate an image of Salazar as a martyr with significance to the Chicano movement and equally, their own legacy in the community. A vocal proponent of this remembrance has been former LA County Supervisor, Gloria Molina. A "ground level participant" of the Chicano movement, Molina was a high school student when Salazar was killed.[21] Like other Chicano activists, she has continued to endorse the martyr legacy of Salazar, and her place in Los Angeles politics since the 1980s positioned her to be a driving force in East LA's remembrance of him. One such instance was the plaque dedication ceremony at Salazar Park in 2014. During her speech at the event, Molina was quick to remind those in attendance that Salazar was the heart of Chicano activism, who was, "bigger than all of us, [Salazar] is bigger than East LA."[22] Additionally, Molina emphasized how central Salazar had been to the movement, thus strengthening his connection to it, and his status as a martyr.[23] This remembrance has become only more profound over the years.

Rosalio Muñoz, prominent Chicano activist, who was also co-chair of the Chicano Moratorium has spent his time since the 1970s preserving Chicano history for future generations.[24] Like Molina, Muñoz helped to reinforce Salazar's ties to the Chicano movement. According to Muñoz, "There is so much we can learn about our history, Chicanos' struggle for civil rights through Ruben's writings."[25] Molina and Muñoz's position in the community has helped endorse Salazar's martyr status. His legacy is now unquestionable in East Los Angeles, as several authorized and informal memorials have emerged since 1970.

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[16] "Active Projects," LA County Arts Commission (accessed November 29, 2015) http://www.lacountyarts.org/civicart/searchresults/view/all.

[17] Ruben Salazar and Mario T. A., *Border Correspondent Selected Writings, 1955-1970*, 36.

[18] *Ruben Salazar: Man In The Middle*, Film, directed by Phillip Rodriguez (United States; Latino Public Broadcasting, 2014) Online Video.

[19] Roberto Cintli Rodriguez, "Remembering and Honoring Ruben Salazar," *La Prensa San Diego*, Mar 21, 2008.

[20] Frank Sotomayer, "End the Never-ending Mystery of Ruben Salazar's Death," *LA Observed*, August 27, 2010 (accessed November 4, 2015) http://www.laobserved.com/visiting/2010/08/end_the_never-ending_mystery_o.php.

[21] "Speakers Bio. Gloria Molina," National Dialogue on Workplace Flexibility Pasadena, C.A. - Speakers Bio. Gloria Molina Bio. (accessed November 15, 2015) http://www.dol.gov/wb/media/Molina_biopasadena.htm.

[22] "Ruben Salazar Remembered," *Eastern Group Publications/EGPNews*, September 4, 2014 (accessed October 18, 2015) http://egpnews.com/2014/09/ruben-salazar-remembered/.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

Visual Memorials: Informal and Official Remembrance

Several memorials and murals established in Salazar's name since his death have secured the ways in which he has been remembered. The majority of these memorials are located in East LA and other Chicano communities that felt connected to Salazar. These formal and official memorials were unveiled relatively soon in the years after his death, undertaken during the 1970s, when the clout of Chicano activists was far-reaching. However, it took several decades for more national recognition to occur, culminating with the United States issuing a postal stamp in 2008. Along with the formal dedications, several illustrated memorials, including paintings and murals have continued to emerge at a steady pace, since 1970.

Mere weeks after his death, Laguna Park was renamed to Salazar Park in September 1970.[26] It was a natural fit for memorializing Ruben Salazar, because it was the gathering place at the end of the Chicano Moratorium route, and the site where civil unrest first broke out.[27] Salazar Park was the first official memorial, and an informal meeting place for activists during the next decades, most notably, following the yearly remembrance marches in Salazar's honor on the day he died.[28]

Subsequently, Salazar Park also became the site for a massive mural facing Whittier Boulevard that included Salazar's likeness, albeit on a smaller scale. Created by Paul Botello, and entitled, *The Wall That Speaks, Sings, and Shouts*, the mural was commissioned by the popular and often political Mexican band, Los Tigres Del Norte, and completed in 2000. The mural displays themes of resistance, immigration, scientific advances, family life, and key historical figures in the Chicano community, including Salazar.[29] Although Salazar's representation is minor, his inclusion and its display in Salazar Park, reflect how Salazar has become a part of the Mexican narrative of the East LA community. These memorials and dedications continued in the years that followed, with several other recognitions occurring during the 1970s.

Similar to the dedication of Salazar Park, in October of 1982 The Ruben Salazar Bicentennial Buildings opened in the Lincoln Heights area of Los Angeles. The multipurpose structures were built as an add-on to the Plaza de la Raza, the

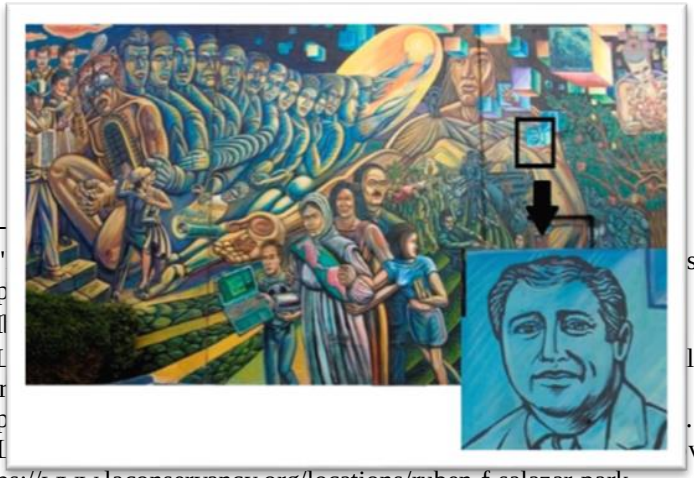


Figure 2. "The Wall That Speaks, Sings, Shouts." Paul Botello, 2000.

oldest multi-discipline art center for the Latino community.[30] Completed

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https://www.laconservancy.org/locations/ruben-f-salazar-park.
[30] "Our Story," Plaza De La Raza, August 4, 2015 (accessed November 18, 2015)
http://www.plazadelaraza.org/media/our-story/.

over a ten-year period, the 1.5 million dollar buildings were funded by donations from private individuals, labor groups, foundations, and major corporations."[31]Arguably, the Mexican community of East LA assisted in fundraising efforts for these buildings in some capacity given the benefits for the community. Once again, Salazar's legacy was tied to his place in East LA history, which is not surprising given Salazar's prior support for an arts center in East Los Angeles.[32]

The Plaza De La Raza commissioned famed Mexican artist, David Alfaro Siqueiros, to create one of the most iconic images of Salazar, "Heroic Voice" in 1971. A striking piece, Siqueiros' illustration presents Salazar as a haunting figure, wearily gazing at the viewer. Below him, is another famous Siqueiros' figure, a shackled woman who represents the oppressed, originally from his mural "New Democracy."[33] The presence of the women, who was first painted in 1944, suggests that Siqueiros and other contemporaries of the 1970s, considered Salazar's death another example of injustice and social inequity. Its residence at the Plaza reflects the efforts of the Chicano community to tie Salazar to their community in the period immediately after his death.



Figure 3. Salazar Stamp. United States Postal Service, 2008.

Similar to the efforts of creating the Ruben Salazar Bicentennial Building, beginning in the mid-'70s, universities began taking steps to formally recognize Salazar, while simultaneously supporting engagement with the Mexican American community.

Sonoma State University named its library in Salazar's honor in 1979[34] and California State University, Los Angeles named a building after him July of 1976, with little fanfare.[35]

Limited official memorials were erected from the 1980s to the 2000s. It was not until 2008, when the most official and prestigious recognition Salazar has received would be established in his honor, a United States Postal Stamp.

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[31] "Ruben Salazar Buildings," *Los Angeles Times* (1923-Current File), Oct 10, 1982 (accessed October 20, 2015) http://search.proquest.com/docview/153289903?accountid=10352.

[32] Ibid.

[33]Guisela Latorre, *Walls of Empowerment Chicana/o Indigenous Murals of California*, (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2008), 50.

[34] Rupert Garcia, "University Library," Ruben Salazar, 1928-1970. 1979 (accessed November 4, 2015) http://library.sonoma.edu/research/guides/regional/notablepeople/salazar. The University bestowed the honor due in large part to Salazar's time spent reporting in Northern California in late 1950s.

[35] "Name Change," *University Times*, Vol. LXVIV No. 8 ed., sec. A. July 19, 1976 (accessed October 29, 2015). A small blurb and picture of the building made note of the name change, approved by the board of trustees, without mention of student or faculty opinion, or information on a dedication ceremony.

While the approval of the stamp was the result of painstaking work from members within the Chicano community, its development was more than likely due to multiculturalism. [36] It took several petitions, organized by Olga Brisefio, director of the University of Arizona's Media, Democracy and Policy Initiative, signed by Latino heavyweights from the National Council of La Raza, Members of Congress, and even members from the popular Mexican American band from East LA, Los Lobos.[37] It was only after two years of organizing and more than ten pounds of paperwork that the stamp was approved and finally released in 2008. However, based on the comments of Terry McCaffrey, manager of stamp development for the postal service, issuing Salazar's stamp was an attempt to provide more Latino representation than anything else. According to McCaffrey, "Hispanics are overdue for more representation… [the postal] agency is "trying to be more inclusive" in creating stamps dedicated to Hispanics, with another on Latin jazz also due soon."[38] Regardless of the intent, Salazar's stamp nevertheless reflects his significance and relevance within the Chicano community.

Latino Journalists Hold Vigil

While Chicano activists were emphasizing Salazar's unjust death to make him a martyr for their political cause, journalists have memorialized Salazar's contributions to the world of print media, creating a different representation. Because of their own focus and remembrance, journalists have portrayed Salazar as a pioneer reporter, who worked tirelessly to uncover the truth, and whose writings had a lasting impact on not only Mexican journalism, but the entire Latino journalism community.[39] This interpretation of Salazar has added depth to his legacy, challenging the simple remembrance of Salazar as a martyr. It has also resulted in journalism awards in his honor, scholars' focus on his early journalism career and a continuous call for more minorities in the field. Another aspect of his legacy continues through the remembrances from his peers and their efforts to preserve his writings.

Salazar's colleagues thought very highly of him, especially as a journalist. Several journalists recounted how they felt about Salazar's skills as a journalist, and the integrity his writings demonstrate. For many Salazar was a trailblazer, the first prominent Mexican American newsman, at the forefront of reporting during the late 1960s.[40] His most influential work was reporting on the conditions of the East LA community. His frankness and ability to speak to both the Mexican and Anglo community was unparalleled.[41] Most notably his infamous article, "What is a Chicano?" in which Salazar attempted to present an informative description of a political and socially charged term to the Anglo community, has been recognized by several journalists as the epitome of honest journalism. [42] Salazar wrote about why Mexicans had chosen the term to identify themselves, and argued that Chicanos were simply fighting to be Americans, but "with a

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[36] Timothy Pratt, 2008, "The Story of a Stamp," Hispanic 21, no. 4: 42-43, OmniFile Full Text Mega (H.W. Wilson), EBSCOhost (accessed October 14, 2015), 2.

[37] Ibid., 2.

[38] Ibid., 2.

[39] Raul Yzaguirre. "Journalists Remember Ruben Salazar," *USA Today*, April 6, 2014 (accessed October 25, 2015) http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2014/04/06/ruben-salazar-hispanics-mexican-america-column/7270091/.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Juan Gonzalez, writer. "Slain Latino Journalist Rubén Salazar, Killed 40 Years Ago in Police Attack, Remembered as Champion of Chicano Rights." In Freedom Of the Press. Democracy Now! August 30, 2010.

[42] Ruben Salazar. "What is a Chicano? And What Is It The Chicanos Want?" *Los Angeles Times* (1923-Current File), Feb 06, 1970, (accessed October 15, 2015) http://search.proquest.com/docview/156476490?accountid=10352.

Chicano twist."[43] His poise and writing abilities crossed demographics and effectively exposed a community that up until that point had had no major representation in the media. Journalists have also rejected the notion that Salazar was a martyr for the Chicano movement, arguing that he was no revolutionary, but instead a journalist who simply tried to expose injustice and discrimination.[44] This respect in the world of journalism has persisted in the decades since, primarily because no other Mexican journalist has achieved similar accolades.

Salazar's writings and success have yet to be matched by any other Mexican or Latino writer. As a result, journalists have devoted resources to preserving Salazar's place in history. In 2012 the Annenberg School of Journalism and Communications at the University of Southern California began the lengthy process of reviewing the personal archive of Salazar, who they named, "the most famous Latino journalist in the United States."[45] Students and faculty methodically went through several boxes of Salazar's items, cataloging and digitizing them in the process. Their work result in the detailed and rich *Ruben Salazar Project Website and Archive*, and its content echo the opinion of many journalists and scholars who have reflected on Salazar's legacy. Several journalists believe it is necessary to remember his contributions to the news world, and recognize other journalists who are attempting to follow in his footsteps.

Olga Brisefio, one of the main supporters of the Salazar stamp, was also a board member of the California Chicano News Media Association (CCNMA) and organizer of a 1990 conference on Salazar's legacy. She and other news colleagues urged for more Hispanics and other minorities in newsrooms across the United States.[46] This push can be seen in the many journalism awards created in Salazar's honor. The CCNMA, along with the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) created separate awards in Salazar's honor. According to both organizations, these prizes are awarded to journalists and others in the media, for their contributions and representation of Latino communities and people.[47] The awards were created exclusively for two reasons; to honor the memory of Salazar and as a call for more diversity in newsrooms. The journalists remembering Salazar as a journalist do so because they feel that Salazar's legacy presents them with an opportunity to seek change in the medium.

Several Latino journalists, Chicano activists, and white liberals have been motivated by the journalism integrity Salazar invoked. One such instance is Rosa Guerrero. In a 2014 opinion piece in the *El Paso Times*, Guerrero, a Mexican American activist, as well as known humanitarian, educator, and founder of the International Folklorico Dance Group, described how Salazar had inspired her life. For Guerrero, hearing about Salazar's career from his mother Luz, inspired her to become a civil rights activist and speaker.[48] Guerrero's story is not unlike other notable individuals who were moved by Salazar's writing and actions before his death. Ken Flynn, a reporter who worked with Salazar at the *Herald Post* in the 1950s, called Salazar a trailblazer and Flynn, like many journalists, tried to emulate him.[49] Salazar has influenced so

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[43] Ruben Salazar, "What is a Chicano? And What Is It The Chicanos Want?".

[44] Frank Sotomayor, "End the Never-ending Mystery of Ruben Salazar's Death," *LA Observed*, August 27, 2010 (accessed November 4, 2015) http://www.laobserved.com/visiting/2010/08/end_the_never-ending_mystery_o.php.

[45] "Ruben Salazar Project," Ruben Salazar Project, 2012 (accessed November 3, 2015) http://rubensalazarproject.com/about-us/.

[46] Timothy Pratt, 2008, "The Story of a Stamp," 2.

[47] Raul Yzaguirre, "Journalists Remember Ruben Salazar," *USA Today*.

[48] Rosa Guerrero, "Rosa Guerrero: Ruben Salazar Inspired Life," *El Paso Times.com*, (2014):2 (accessed October 29, 2015) http://www.elpasotimes.com/opinion/ci_25400346/rub-n-salazar-inspired-rosa-guerrero/.

[49] Michael Qunitanilla, "The Trailblazer: Ruben Salazar Was a Man of Many Firsts Who Paved the Way for Other Latino Journalists. Now, 25 Years after His Death, His Beneficiaries and a Book Honor Him," *Los Angeles Times*,

many within the community because his story is a relatable one, another classic American story about a regular guy motivated by principle who challenged an abusive authority.[50] However, not all individuals who knew Salazar would agree with any of the memorials discussed thus far.

Ruben Salazar: Middle-Class Mortal

While several groups in East LA and greater Chicano community have accessed the memory of Salazar for their own purposes, his wife and close friends, do not agree with this collective memory. They argue that Salazar was not an activist or martyr and he never would have wanted to be considered one. Instead, Salazar was a middle class Mexican American who was not tied to the Chicano community, as many would like to believe. They also contend that Salazar was torn between two cultures, that he had not yet fully found his place before his death, and that he would not have liked his public image today.

The strongest criticism against the public legacy of Salazar came from his wife Sally Salazar. In an article written ten years after Ruben Salazar's death, Sally Salazar reflected on her husband and the public memory of him. After sharing recollections about what she remembered about him when he died, Sally reflected on what his legacy had become. Sally argued, "Ten years later, my memories are confused by the murals and memorials and a creation built in the public mind- someone other people call Rubén Salazar, but someone who to this day I don't fully recognize."[51] For Mrs. Salazar, the public memory of her husband seemed foreign because it did not align with her own memory of him. Her editorial recognizes that for her, Salazar was first a husband and a father to their three children. She believed that at the time of his death Salazar was still attempting to sort out his identity and where he fit in the world.[52]

Salazar's widow discussed the ways in which her late husband did not fit the Mexican folk hero he had become in the eyes of many in the Mexican community of East LA. She argued that his personality did not fit the figure painted on murals alongside people like Cesar Chavez; nor did it merit being mentioned alongside Zapata and Villa, for revolutionary actions he did not partake in. According to Sally Salazar, Ruben Salazar was far more conservative than he has been depicted. Sally Salazar saw a man whose life and beliefs were more toward the middle, between Mexican and Anglo. Salazar considered himself part of the "middle class establishment", who had gotten out of the barrios.[53] This alternative memory is completely opposite to what Chicano activists, and to a certain extent, Latino journalists, have been endorsing for decades. Sally's personal accounts and her closeness to Salazar cannot be ignored, and reveal the intricacy of the public image and remembrance of Salazar. It would seem that inevitably, he had simultaneously become all and none of these representations.

Similar to Sally Salazar's commentary, Frank Del Olmo's 1980 article echoes her sentiments of Salazar's false martyr status. Del Olmo, who was a close friend and colleague of Salazar's, argued that Salazar had merely been doing his job the day he was killed reporting on

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August 21, 1995 (accessed November 2, 2015) http://articles.latimes.com/1995-08-21/news/ls-37335_1_ruben-salazar.

[50] Allie Jessing, "Four Questions with the Filmmakers of Rubén Salazar: Man in the Middle," Eye Level, February 25, 2014 (accessed October 29, 2015) http://eyelevel.si.edu/2014/02/four-questions-with-the-filmmakers-of-rubn-salazar-man-in-the-middle.html.

[51] Sally Salazar, "The Rubén Salazar I Remember," *La Prensa San Diego*, Mar 07, 2014 (accessed October 2, 2015) http://search.proquest.com/docview/1512531080?accountid=10352.

[52] Ibid., 2.

[53] Ibid., 2.

the moratorium, and the martyr status that was created was not only unfounded, but has only grown with the passage of time.[54] Particularly, Del Olmo takes issue with some of the murals and art that have been created to perpetuate this memory of Salazar. One such piece is the Plaza De La Raza commissioned David Alfaro Siqueiros' sketch, "Heroic Voice." Del Olmo was uncomfortable with the depiction of Salazar as saint "with a distance-long suffering look to the eyes."[55] While these published alternative perspectives have not deterred the mythos of Salazar and his place in East LA memory, they nonetheless showcase how Salazar was more than the constructed collective memory.

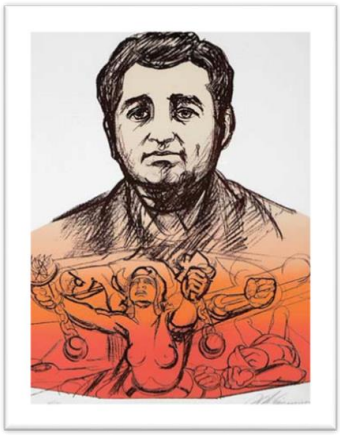


Figure 4. "Heroic Voice"
(Alternative Title: Por La Vida).
David Alfaro Siquieros, 1971.

Sally Salazar and Frank Del Olmo's commentary is even more striking given Phillip Rodriguez's recent documentary, appropriately titled, *Ruben Salazar: Man In The Middle*. Researched and completed decades after Salazar's death, Phillip Rodriguez's film attempts to deconstruct Salazar, concluding that Salazar was the proverbial man in the middle. While much of Rodriguez's analysis looks at the nature of Salazar's reporting career and his death, this new analysis also attempts to strike a balance between what has been conceived by the community, how close family and friends have chosen to remember him, and what the "truth" might possibly be. While there are no clear conclusions, Rodriguez is able to move beyond the flat image of Salazar as a martyr and instead portrays him as a living real person-- a man who tried until the day he died to be, "A Mexican American [who played] by the Anglo's rules and then proceeded to help loosen the grip on the [Mexican] culture."[56]

The release of Phillip Rodriguez's documentary allowed for a rediscovery of Salazar, which has been lacking in recent years. One such instance was the installation of a temporary exhibit at Cal State LA, the local university that dedicated a building to Salazar back in 1976.

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[54] Frank Del Olmo, "Ruben Salazar: Los Angeles' Misunderstood Martyr," *Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File)*, Aug 24, 1980 (accessed October 20, 2015) http://search.proquest.com/docview/162880820?accountid=10352.

[55] Ibid., 2.

[56] Allie Jessing, "Four Questions with the Filmmakers of Rubén Salazar: Man in the Middle," Eye Level, February 25, 2014 (accessed October 29, 2015) http://eyelevel.si.edu/2014/02/four-questions-with-the-filmmakers-of-rubn-salazar-man-in-the-middle.html.

The exhibition included Salazar's articles, personal family pictures, on loan from USC, and Cal State LA's own memorabilia from the Chicano Moratorium protest. According to Azalea Camacho, Cal State LA Library Archivist and member of the planning committee, the exhibition was inspired by the documentary,[57] with the goal of educating students and engaging with the East LA community.[58] While the exhibition featured no new pieces, its inclusion of many aspects of Salazar's legacy, the participation of Rosalio Muñoz, and its location at Cal State L.A., suggests that the passage of time has allowed for Salazar's complex legacy to become more transparent. The memory of Salazar lives on, in many different capacities and meanings, but it lives on nonetheless, revealing his relevance, the most significant aspect.

The legacy of Ruben Salazar is a fluid one. It is a legacy that has been shaped, changed, contested and claimed by the community he wrote about, used and reconstructed to fit their needs, reflecting this community just as much, if not more, than the man himself. It is also a legacy that is still drawing attention and consideration. For instance, following the 2014 killing of African American teenager Michael Brown, Raul Reyes wrote in *USA Today* an article that the Latino community could relate to because Brown's death at the hands of a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, echoed that of Salazar's.[59] Reyes argument is indicative of what kind of legacy has persisted of Salazar, and what it will most likely continue to be in the minds of people in East LA and the greater Chicano community. Although not everyone agrees with all the facets of Salazar's remembrance, the fact that any form of this legacy has persisted reveals Salazar's relevance, the impact of his life and work, and its unmatched ability to not only the people of East LA, but activists, journalists, and people across the United States. As such, the collective memory of this pioneering journalist may vary, but it will not be forgotten.

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[57] Azalea Camacho, "Salazar Exhibit," Interview by author, November 19, 2015.

[58] Salazar Exhibit Committee Email, 14 May 2014, Box 1 Folder 5, Ruben Salazar Exhibit, Cal State L.A. Archives and Special Collections, Cal State L.A. Library.

[59] Raul Reyes, n.d., "Michael Brown's shooting resonates with Latinos," *USA Today*, n.d. *MAS Ultra - School Edition*, EBSCO*host* (accessed October 14, 2015).