

## Pride and Pain: The Chicano Mind

*The Chicano Mind* (1973) by Guillermo Martinez is a large-scale piece, depicting an artistic vision of Chicano history. The mural, with its use of repetition and wide color palette, tries to capture Martinez's feelings on the subject. Pride, pain, and the weight of history can all be seen in this piece.

The piece has a radial white and red striped background, on the left half of a circle can be seen with a repeated pattern in hues of green and yellow. The main portion of the mural depicts a large circular disc with a figure in the center, holding his arms out. At the end of each arm is a repeated line of fists that stretch to the end of the mural. A snaking line of heads surround the figure, all different in color and in facial features. Above the figure sits a smaller circle, the border made up of holding up flags and playing American flag decorated drums. In the lower left of the border is an eagle holding a snake in its mouth, while figures in the center fight. Below the center figure are the words "Viva La Raza" spelled out by soldiers on horses, meaning *Long Live The Race*.

As stated before, the mural shows a circle above the center figure's head, depicting a fight between two forces. The two sides can be deciphered to be America and Mexico. Drummers with large red white and blue top hats stand on the bottom half of the circle. While a figure with endless arms holding up a white flag with a blue star, red and white striped fabric draping from their arms outlines the top half. On the inner border are soldiers with guns drawn, gazes focused on the center battle. Men in red, white and blue, attire invoking the image of Uncle Sam, fight with Men in brown suits with wide sombreros. One of the American soldiers hoists two guns in the air while

another tackles a man to the ground and the center stabs a man in the back. Martinez conveys this message of the dueling countries the clearest with his depiction of the Mexican coat of arms, whose symbol can be seen in the bottom left of the circle. The eagle sits perched in its matching brown hues wearing a sombrero, the Mexican flag draped across its back. In one claw it holds a guitar, while the other, along with its beak, holds a snake. While the eagle holding a rattlesnake in its mouth is the Mexican coat of arms, this snake has a unique appearance. It has alternating red and white stripes and bears a matching top hat. This excess of violence depicted in this section of the painting shows the brutality that the United States has inflicted on Mexico. While the American soldiers hold the upperhand on this battle, the people of Mexico have not given up on the battle, throwing back punches and not relinquishing their ground. There is a spirit of resilience displayed, one that can be summed up by the single image of the Mexican eagle eating the American snake.

The figure at the center of the mural stands with his arms extended, his head is tipped back in pain as he clutches his fists. A long red string drapes from one hand to the other, tangling around the torso. With the use of line and color the body looks like it is stripped to muscle, his organs sticking out of his stomach. The pose itself is invoking a Christ-like figure, the man with his arms raised out, clad of any clothes, his face in pain as a nail impales his wrist.

Surrounding the center figure on either side is a twisting line of faces. The lines extend from the top of the mural to the bottom. The wide range of color comes back into play in this portion of the art, the faces beautifully rendered in shades of blue, green, red and yellow. This parade of faces gives the viewer a lot to take in, we can see many

invoking images of the past. The face closest to the viewer is wearing an Aztec headdress, a few behind we see one wearing a morion. Further back we see a group of men in soldier hats. On the right, faces of men with their deep brown skin, large hats and dark mustaches. A decorated skull is shown in the upper left. It's of interest to note that only two faces seem to be depicted as having eyes, the figure with the Aztec headdress and the one behind it in a shell like helmet. The rest of the heads are depicted with black eye holes, making one view them like masks. It makes the viewer think about the Mexican "lineage" spanning different years, backgrounds all in conflict but all connected to the history of the land and its people.

Martinez's mural is a vibrant piece that strongly utilizes repetition to speak to the viewer. Despite the chaotic impression one gets initially, looking deeper into the work one can see the themes of the Chicano movement valued by the artist. The central figure embodies the complexities of being a part of the Mexican-American-mixed Chicano culture and acknowledging there is a pain that comes with being a part of this history but also highlighting there is a pride and resilience in it.