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Dramatic Publishing

UNCONQUERED SPIRITS

A Historical Play
by
JOSEFINA LOPEZ



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

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(UNCONQUERED SPIRITS)

Cover design by Susan Carle

ISBN 0-87129-724-8

UNCONQUERED SPIRITS

is dedicated to **La Llorona** and all the “crying women” throughout history; to my mother Catalina; Emma Tenayuca for her courage beyond her years; Cal State, Northridge Chicano Studies Professor **Rudolfo Acuña**; author **Rudolfo Anaya**, historian **Jose López**, and to the unconquered spirit of the Chicana/Chicano.

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Playwright's Notes

"History should be looked at through everyone's subjective experience," said historian Jose López who spoke to a college group of Latino students who couldn't agree whether to call themselves "Latin" or "Hispanic" Alliance. For me this was no longer an issue because I had resolved to call myself a Chicana. This was the first time I had heard a historian mention the importance of everyone's experience in history, including women. He added, "We should see the conquest of Mexico, not as an invasion by Spain of Mexico, but as the rape of thousands of Native American women by Spanish men." I was blown away because for the first time I felt the experience of women was being validated. "The same goes with slavery in the United States. We should look at the experience of all the enslaved women who were raped during this period of history," he added. That day, I left school feeling empowered by this point of view and the overwhelming amount of facts and information that shattered so many myths about Columbus' glorified "discovery of America."

This excitement led me to do more research and in my investigation of the histories of Latin America and religion, I "discovered" a few things. I discovered history is always told through a man's point of view. "His-story" is also always told by the winner. Women and their bodies have always been the battlefield on which personal and political wars (rape) are fought. Women represent a man's most valued "possession," therefore her body also represents the prize, thus making her the loser.

No matter who wins the battle, women will always lose (i.e. rape, impregnation, or loss of children). And since she is always the "loser," "her-story" is never told. History is therefore devoid of "her" experience, "her" point of view, and

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“her-story.” It’s as if all these men who have discovered, created, and destroyed, throughout history had no mother, (well maybe Hitler didn’t). Women are not included in history, are not given credit, and worst of all we are blamed for so many things. Interestingly, one man commands the dropping of atomic bombs on hundreds of thousands of human beings, but no one blames him or “malekind.” One woman kills her children or gives a man an apple to eat and women will never hear the end of it. When we look at history we must ask ourselves who is telling the story and why. I am telling this her-story through my point of view, a feminist and Chicana’s point of view, in my attempt to pose a “What if...?”

A couple of years before I started calling myself a Chicana, I use to call myself “Hispanic,” (only because I had been to New York City and rather than let people refer to me as “Spanish,” I preferred to call myself “Hispanic”). I stopped calling myself Hispanic when it was pointed out to me that “Hispanic” only makes reference to the Spanish side of my **mestizo** heritage. I had never stopped to think about this before because all my life I took for granted that I had Spanish blood.

I was born with light features and this was always seen as something positive by my relatives. I never meant to be in “denial” about my identity, because I have always been proud of being Mexican, but I was ignorant about my indigenous heritage. I adopted the title of “Chicana” because I wanted to recognize the indigenous side of who I am. Even though, “Chicano” has a negative connotation, (“Chicanos are hippies who wear bandannas and start riots” according to my older sibling), by taking on this title I hope to dispel myths about Chicanos as being uneducated, angry, confused, and with a “chip on their shoulders.”

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With this play I hope to give recognition to my “mother,” which is Mexico. I wrote this play for Mexico and for my great-great-great-...“grandmother” who was Aztec and was raped by the Spaniards. I am recognizing her and accepting her because she is just as important as my Spanish great-great-great-...“grandfather.” The Chicano was born out of rape and hatred. This play was born out of love and acceptance...and “What if...?”

Josefina López
Los Angeles
April 28, 1995

UNCONQUERED SPIRITS

A Play in Two Acts

For 10 Men, 13 Women (may be reduced by double casting)

CHARACTERS

JUANA late 30s, Xochimilco's mother
XOCHIMILCO as a young girl 10 years old
TONANTZIN the mother of the Aztec Gods
SOLDIER a Spanish soldier
FRAY BARTOLOME a kind man
FRAY FRANCISCO an evil man
OLLIN an old native man
XOCHITL early 20s, a naive girl
TEXCOCO a young native
TIXOC one of the last Aztec priests
TLALOC an Aztec deity
PARTERA a mid-wife
LA LLORONA the crying woman spirit
XOCHIMILCO, as a grown woman 35 years old
MALINA 10, Xochimilco's daughter
LOLA late 30s, Xochimilco's co-worker and friend
PETRA late 50s, Xochimilco's co-worker and friend
EMMA 21, an intelligent woman who is a communist
CHRIS .. supervisor at the pecan factory, Xochimilco's lover
SERAFINA a woman who performs abortions
PRIEST he punishes Xochimilco for her abortion
ANGELS Xochimilco's saviours and helpers
BAILIFF he takes Malina away from Xochimilco

UNCONQUERED SPIRITS was first presented at California State University, Northridge, April 28, 1995. It was directed by Anamarie Garcia; with set design by Cesar Holguin; light design by Laura Yates; costume design by Jackie Dalley; and sound design by Cliff Schneider. The cast was as follows:

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| JUANA | Raquel Sánchez |
| XOCHIMILCO, as a young girl | Estela Sánchez |
| TONANTZIN | Laura Clark |
| SOLDIER/BAILIFF | Vadim L. Ladon |
| FRAY BARTOLOME | John Warfield |
| FRAY FRANCISCO | Christian Lutz |
| OLLIN | Dennis Rosello |
| XOCHITL | Alice McKenzie |
| TEXCOCO | Mario Martinez |
| TIXOC | Anthony Catala |
| TLALOC | Soriya Kim |
| PARTERA | Hilda Corral |
| LA LLORONA | Kristina D. Quesada |
| XOCHIMILCO, as a grown woman | Juana Maria Valdivia |
| MALINA | Rachel A. Garcia |
| LOLA | Maria Ayón |
| PETRA | Raquel Sánchez |
| EMMA | Marina E. Gonzalez |
| CHRIS | Chad Rogers |
| SERAFINA | Hilda Corral |
| PRIEST | Mauro Ali Fuentes |
| ANGELS | Laura Clark, Soriya Kim |

Acknowledgements

Anamarie Garcia for courageously taking on the challenge of bringing my vision to the theater, my father Rosendo López, Jon Mercedes III, Felipe Salazar, Keisuke Fukuda, Cal State Northridge Theater Dept. & the cast, Florentino Manzano, Philip Handler, John Furman, Winslow Rogers, Professor Jorge Huerta, Rosa Escalante, MEChA, and the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center in San Antonio, and the Arizona Theatre Company.

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

Mexico, 1913

(The lights come on to a small wooden shack. The moon is full, illuminating the mountain peaks. C is a giant tree with several branches that stick out as though they were the arms of women reaching out of the tree. This tree is 500 years old and it stands firm, delicate as nature can be, but strong like a cannon or a phallus, erect towards heaven. The wind blows and whistles throughout the night. JUANA, looking older than her years, wearing an old dress and a dirty apron, comes out of the small shack. She takes off her apron and looks out to the tiny lake close by.)

JUANA. Xochimilco! Xochimilco! Get in here! **¡Ven aquí!**
¡Ahorita! *(She waits for a response. She walks further D to the lake.)* **Ya es tarde.** It's late! You have to finish packing!

(XOCHIMILCO, 10 years old, enters.)

XOCHIMILCO *(enthusiastically)*. No! I don't want to go!
JUANA *(goes to XOCHIMILCO, pulling her by the ear)*. Go inside the house and pack your things. Stop being a little **diablita**, do what I say and be an angel, **porfavor**.
XOCHIMILCO. But angels don't have any fun! *(XOCHIMILCO pulls away and runs from her. She covers her ears and challenges JUANA.)* **Mami**, try catching me now!

JUANA. ¡Ayy, diabla! ¡Vas a verlo! When you have a daughter she's going to be just like you *de traviesa*, you'll see.

XOCHIMILCO (*whining*). I already packed my bags...Can I go back down to the water?

JUANA. No, you're going to turn into a *sirenita*, or a little duck. (*JUANA catches XOCHIMILCO and tickles her tummy. They laugh.*)

XOCHIMILCO. Are there lakes where we are going?

JUANA. Si. Your aunt tells me it's nice. And you'll have your cousins to play with. You'll like it over there.

XOCHIMILCO. Mamí, I don't want to leave. Why do we have to leave Mexico?

JUANA. Because there's nothing here for us.

XOCHIMILCO. What about my Papi? What if he returns from *la revolucion* and doesn't find us here?

JUANA. Xochimilco, get inside the house now and get ready for bed! **Hasme caso.**

XOCHIMILCO. No! I don't want to go!

JUANA. ¡Ahora si vas a verlo! If your father were here...! (*JUANA breaks out crying. XOCHIMILCO tries to hold back her own tears.*)

XOCHIMILCO. Mamí, my Papi isn't coming back, is he? (*JUANA stops crying unsure what to say.*) Is that why that letter you got last week made you cry so much? (*JUANA nods painfully. XOCHIMILCO tries to be strong for her mother.*) I'll be good. Don't cry, Mamita. (*XOCHIMILCO comforts her mother.*) Mamita, in my prayers I ask God to take care of my Papi...Mamí...Where is heaven?

JUANA. Up there?

XOCHIMILCO. Where is hell?

JUANA. Sometimes I think it's right here on earth. Xochi, **mijita**, for the last time, get inside the house and get ready, or...or...

XOCHIMILCO. Or what?

JUANA. Or...**La Llorona** will get you!

XOCHIMILCO. What? Who?

JUANA. **La Llorona**. I'm surprised you haven't seen her yet. (*JUANA sits down nonchalantly.*) **La Llorona** is the spirit of a woman all dressed in white who roams by the rivers of Mexico looking for her dead children who she killed a long time ago...An uncle of mine saw her many years ago when he was herding sheep one night. She came to him and asked him for water. He said she was very beautiful with long golden hair and a pale face. He asked her what she was doing there so late and she simply said she usually walked by there at night. She thanked him for the water and walked away. From a distance she screamed "¡¡Ay mis hijos!!" and then disappeared.

XOCHIMILCO (*intrigued and scared*). Why did she kill her children?

JUANA. Are you sure you want to know? You might not want to go down to the lake after you hear the story...Let me see if I can remember it...A long time ago, there was a very beautiful Indian woman and a handsome Spaniard who fell in love. They loved each other very much and had children. Then he left her and went off to Spain to marry another woman. When he returned to Mexico the Indian woman went to a big ball and saw them dancing happily together. She was so angry that she went home and killed her children. She cut them into little pieces and threw them into a river. Then she killed herself. But when her spirit reached the gates of heaven, God would not let her in until she found her children. So her spirit roams the rivers of

Mexico looking for her children, screaming, “¡¡Ayy mis hijos!! (XOCHIMILCO, screams. JUANA laughs.)

XOCHIMILCO. But how could she kill her children?

JUANA. She lost her mind, *se volvió loca*, and did it out of revenge.

XOCHIMILCO. Maybe it was an accident.

JUANA. No, she was a bad woman and a terrible mother...

And when she sees little girls like you misbehaving she goes to their bed, pulls them out, and takes them away.

XOCHIMILCO. She won't take me, will she, *Mami*?

JUANA. She will if you continue to disobey me. *Así es que siguele*. I'll tell her to come and get you. I'll even give you to her. Who needs a bad little girl? (XOCHIMILCO starts crying.) No, no, *no te apures*, I was just trying to scare you. Don't be scared, if you're a good girl, nothing's going to happen to you...All right, you can go down to the water for a little bit, if you still want to. Just remember, we have to wake up early to catch the train. (JUANA kisses her on the forehead and leaves. XOCHIMILCO, who was pretending to be crying, quickly changes expressions. She is about to run back into the water when she stops to reconsider.)

XOCHIMILCO. Ah...No, I think I'll just lie here, just in case *La Llorona* passes by...Not that I'm scared or anything... but it's getting late, it's cold...and I'm sleepy. (She goes to her bed and lies down, and gets ready to go to sleep. She starts praying.) *Padre nuestro que estás en los cielos*, forgive me because I am not on my knees, but I don't want *La Llorona* to get me...God, if you can really hear me, please take care of my *Papí*. I know he is in heaven with the *angelitos*. God, please take care of my *Mamita* and me...Amen. (XOCHIMILCO does the sign of the cross and goes to sleep. Lights fade out slowly.)

SCENE TWO

Tenochtitlán, 1521

(TONANTZIN, the Aztec Goddess of the earth, screams from the very top of the Pyramid of the Sun as Tenochtitlán is being destroyed. The shadows of fire are seen. All around her is chaos.)

TONANTZIN. **¡¡Ayy mis hijos!!** Look how they are destroying Tenochtitlán! Look how the flowers are dying. **¡¡Ayy mis hijos!!**

(TWO SPANISH SOLDIERS capture TONANTZIN and tie her to a cross. The pyramid is quickly transformed into a Mission. They place the cross on the top of what used to be the Pyramid of the Sun to establish the new reign. As the lights fade out we hear the following along with angelic music.)

BISHOP *(voice-over)*. The true and universal God, our Lord, Creator and dispenser of being and life, as we have been telling you in our sermons, has a character different from that of your Gods. He does not deceive; He lies not; He hates no one, despises no one. There is nothing evil in Him. He is perfectly good. He is the essence of love, compassion, and mercy. And He showed his infinite mercy when He made Himself man here on earth like us; humble and poor, like us. He is eternal, He created heaven and earth and hell. He created us, all the men in the world, and He also created the devils whom you hold to be Gods and whom you call Gods, and who did not support you in the slightest, while the true and omnipotent God has allowed his faithful servants, the Spaniards, to conquer Mexico...