The Virgin of Guadalupe and Her Political Journey

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April 21, 2026

In several Latino communities, and rarely in other communities, the figure of the Virgin of Guadalupe can be found. Her image has been used in pop culture and media through fashion, art, products, and TV shows. The Virgin of Guadalupe is the Mexican apparition of the Virgin Mary, and she is said to have appeared in New Spain in 1593.[1] In the apparition story, she chose to appear to an indigenous man named Juan Diego on his cloak, and this imprint is now on display in the Basilica of the Virgin of Guadalupe in Tepeyac, Mexico.[2] Like many religious figures, the Guadalupe has been used to assist with religious practices like prayer, but she quickly became a political symbol and figure for those of Mexican descent. Mexican artists and activists have used her image to justify their movement, validate their identity, and speak against societal standards built on religious culture. In the instances where she has been used, many artistic methods are typically applied, such as self-reflection portraits and narrative. This paper will investigate six main movements where the Virgin's image has been used: the Mexican Independence, the *Zapatista* movement, the United Farm Workers, *Chicano* feminism, *Chicano* LGBTQ+ rights, and immigration. It is important to keep in mind that there are numerous reasons why she has appeared visually. These movements were chosen based on their importance to Mexican history and the ability to recognize patterns of methodology. By using these images, we will have the ability to interpret what the Guadalupe means to the artist and/or movement and how she is used as a form of resistance to fit these political groups'messages. This analysis seeks to understand the icon's connection and relationship outside religious purposes. There are two main methods that these political groups tend to use for their depictions: the original appearance

[1] Charlene Villaseñor Black, "The Virgin of Guadalupe as an Iconic Image in Mexican Culture," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Latin American History*, May 24, 2018, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199366439.013.509, 1.

[2] Villaseñor Black, "The Virgin of Guadalupe as an Iconic Image in Mexican Culture,"1.

of the Guadalupe (traditional) or an altered version.[3] Her traditional appearance consists of a teal star-patterned cloak, sunrays, an angel below her, and a black crescent moon.



[Figure 0] *Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe on the mantle (tilma) of Juan Diego*.

The origin of this image is shrouded in mystery; many details cannot be verified. Despite this, her design comes across as an intentional mixture of Spanish and indigenous culture. This may have caused the appeal to many artists throughout Mexican history since they are of mixed descent and may feel a connection to her in that aspect.

The evident details that hint at indigeneity are her tan skin tone and her pin-straight dark hair.[4] These are physical traits that are often found for those of indigenous background. The European elements in the image of the Guadalupe align with the image of the Woman of the Apocalypse. According to Charlene Villaseñor Black, these traits are based on descriptions of

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[3] Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe on the Mantle (Tilma) of Juan Diego, December 6, 2006, Digital Photograph, Wikimedia Commons, December 6, 2006, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Virgen_de_guadalupe1.jpg.
[4]Villaseñor Black, "The Virgin of Guadalupe as an Iconic Image in Mexican Culture," 4.

the Woman of the Apocalypse in the New Testament Book of Revelation and the Songs of Songs.[5] Villasenor Black then goes on to list these traits as the sunrays, the moon below her feet, the element of stars, and pose.[6] These components are similar to how the Woman of the Apocalypse is described and depicted. The direct connection with Spain is the name Guadalupe, which is taken from the Mary in Guadalupe, *Extremadura*.[7] She is the main apparition that came with the Spanish to New Spain.

With all of these features combined, it becomes apparent how the Guadalupe is an embodiment of someone who is mixed race. The identity of being mixed race is what the majority of these artists are trying to define under the label of 'Mexican.' Yet, in these instances, identity is often affected by politics, which the artists are also trying to redefine and combat.

Early Political Uses of the Virgin:

The political use of the Virgin of Guadalupe began with specific events that have not been heavily analyzed, as they were usually sporadic. To be more specific, on these occasions, her image was not the focus of these events, more of an afterthought. Despite this, these incidents have been highly significant in Mexican history, and the decision to use the Virgin's likeness in them should be investigated. Two events that are specifically being referred to are the Mexican Independence and the *Zapatista* movement.

The Mexican Independence and the parish priest Miguel Hidalgo's application of the Virgin were the outset of her association with the political Mexican identity. To set the scene, Hidalgo was considered to be the founder and liberator of Mexico during the independence from Spain in 1810.[8] The priest was also the individual who was credited with starting the fight with

[5] Villaseñor Black, "The Virgin of Guadalupe as an Iconic Image in Mexican Culture, 4.
[6] Villaseñor Black, "The Virgin of Guadalupe as an Iconic Image in Mexican Culture, 4.
[7] Villaseñor Black, "The Virgin of Guadalupe as an Iconic Image in Mexican Culture, 4.

his well-known *Cry of Dolores,* of which Patricia Harrington quotes a snippet: "*Viva la Virgen de* Guadalupe and death to the *gachupines*!"[9] The focus is on the visual use of the Virgin, although her being mentioned in the chant is a noteworthy cue to her importance to the *Criollo* community at the very least, since they could have chosen a different apparition of Mary instead. There is evidence of several apparitions of the Virgin Mary existing during New Spain, yet they picked the Guadalupe. *Criollos* refers to individuals who are of Spanish descent who have been born and raised in New Spain.[10] Another piece of interest was the banner used during Hidalgo's cry [Figure 1].[11]



[Figure 1] *The Revolutionary Banner Carried by Hidalgo.* Oil painting on cloth. Mexico, 1810.

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[8] Enrique Dussel, "Christian Art of the Oppressed in Latin America (towards an Aesthetics of Liberation)," Concilium 152 (1980): 40–52, 47.

[9] Patricia Harrington, "Mother of Death, Mother of Rebirth: The Mexican Virgin of Guadalupe," Journal of the American Academy of Religion 56, no. 1 (1988): 25–50, https://doi.org/10.2307/1464830, 39. *Gachupines,* Merriam-Webster, ed. s.v. "Spanish settler in America who immigrated from Spain" accessed April 21, 2026, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/gachupin.

[10] *Crillos,* Merriam-Webster, ed.accessed April 21, 2026,https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/criollo.

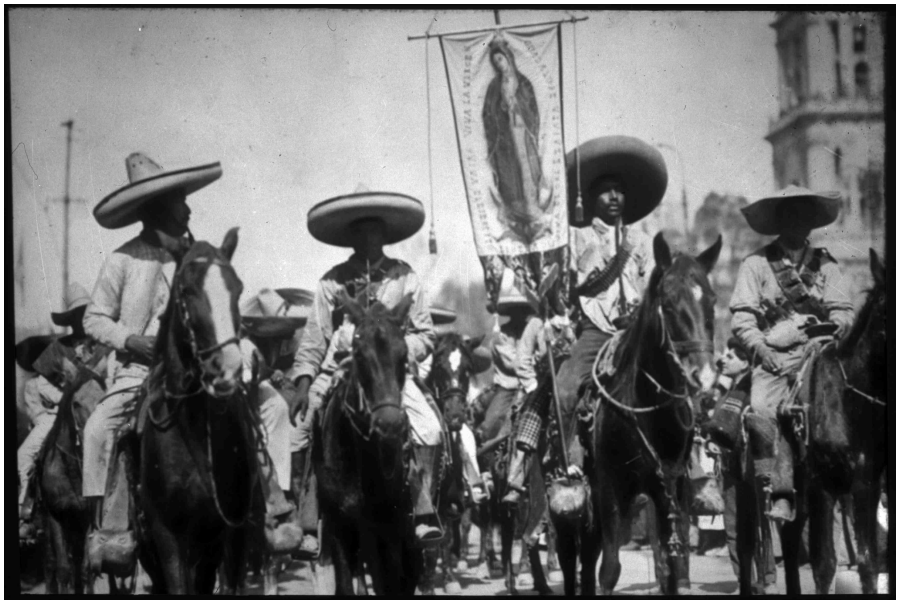
[11] Marcuse, The Revolutionary Banner Carried by Hidalgo, November 1, 2006, Digital Photograph, Wikimedia Commons, November 1, 2006, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Guadalupano.jpg.

The Virgin was the main visual that was used for this rebellion.[12] However, this is not the only supposed image of the Virgin that was present at the revolt. In the 1810 revolt, there was also observation of flags with the Guadalupe on them, which had the keywords, "Long live religion! Long live our most holy Mother of Guadalupe!..."[13] Harrington insinuates in her text *Mother of Death, Mother of Rebirth: The Mexican Virgin of Guadalupe* that the Virgin's use during independence was a "...symbol of something new being born in Mexico."[14] This 'something' was a declaration of the Virgin, a symbol of what Mexican identity would be and her role for the Mexican people. In this case, her role was one of rebellion and the definition of the Mexican nation, which at the time was a mixture of racial statuses.

The second time a political group used the Guadalupe was during the Mexican Revolution, with the *Zapatista* movement, in 1910-20. The main objective of the *Zapatista* movement was to advocate for indigenous rights in Mexico, and as a group, they were known to have her image with them in the form of a flag before strikes.[15] This can be supported by photographs of the *Zapatistas* taken by Agustín Víctor Casasola. To be more specific, in *Tropas zapatistas,*[16] the photograph depicts a *Zapatista* holding a pole with a flag/banner featuring Guadalupe while traveling with his troop [Figure 2].

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[12] Harrington, "Mother of Death, Mother of Rebirth: The Mexican Virgin of Guadalupe," 39.
[13] Stephen M. Hart, "The 'Event' of Nationalism," *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* 92, no. 7 (June 25, 2015): 1113–27, https://doi.org/10.1080/14753820.2015.1041330, 1116.
[14] Patricia Harrington, "Mother of Death, Mother of Rebirth: The Mexican Virgin of Guadalupe,"39.
[15] Tijen Tunali, "The Vision and Practice of Zapatismo and the Zapatista Murals in Chiapas," in *The Routledge Companion to Marxisms in Art History*, ed. Brain Winkenweder (New York: Routledge, 2025), 429–47, 440.
[16] Agustín Víctor Casasola, *Tropas Zapatistas*, 1915, Photograph, 1915.



[Figure 2]. Agustín Víctor Casasola, *Tropas zapatistas*, México, D.F., 1915, Fondo Casasola, FINAH

The fact that this group decided to use the Virgin's image is interesting, especially in comparison to Hidalgo's usage, since Hidalgo was of Spanish descent, a *Criollo*. Indigenous groups were seen as less than compared to those of Spanish descent due to a caste system and social views. Several paintings depict the caste system to show hierarchy. Both groups, *Criollo* and indigenous, are then claiming the Virgin as part of their identity and using her as a symbol for resistance to stand up for their communities. This brings the question, then, to whom the Virgin truly belongs.

A notable artwork to mention, which depicts the *Zapatista*, is Fernando Leal's *Campamento de un coronel Zapatista.* He depicts a *Zapatista* wearing a hat with an image of the Guadalupe on its brim.[17] It appears to sit on the brim in a patch-like fashion [Figure 3]. From what can be seen from the previous photograph, Leal's painting accurately reflects the attire that would have been worn by the group. The particular articles of clothing are bandanas, sombreros,

[17] Fernando Leal, Campamento de Un Coronel Zapatista, 1921, Painting, 1921.

and loose-fitting, linen-like clothing.



[Figure 3] Fernando Leal, *Camp of a Zapatista Colonel*, 1921-1922; oil on canvas, Leal Audirac Collection

In the previous photograph, there is no indication that the *Zapatistas'* sombreros would have had the image of the Virgin on the brim. There have not been any other photographs that could support this either. However, other than this detail, the rest of the attire that Leal's work pictures can be determined as accurate. The *Colegio de San Ildefonso,* in translation to English, states the painting was one of the first pieces of artwork that was made depicting the Mexican Revolution and daily life in that period.[18] It is uncertain how the artist would have identified racially, but his painting does serve as a recognition from the public that the Virgin has been

[18] "Fernando Leal," Colegio de San Ildefonso, accessed March 20, 2026, https://sanildefonso.org.mx/espiritudel22/leal.html.

associated with the identity of the *Zapatistas* and their movement. Since this painting was done shortly after the initial wave of the *Zapatista* movement concluded, it appears that Leal was not a member of this cause. His painting conveyed a relaxed demeanor by having this group enjoy a meal, lying on the grass off-guard with their weapons down.

His choice of manufacturing these indigenous activists to be regarded as relaxed people could signal that he agreed with what they stood for or some kind of connection with their identity, which could have resulted in some bias in its creation. It is possible he could have been a mestizo man, just as the *Zapatistas* were. Perhaps this means the addition of the Virgin could have been an image associated with the group but also as a representation of Leal's personal connection to her.

Despite the *Zapatista* movement being better known during the Mexican Revolution, there has still been activity from this indigenous group years after and presently. Over time, there has been more modern imagery of the Virgin in relation to the movement. As described by Tijen Tunali in *The Vision and Practice of Zapatista and the Zapatista Murals in Chiapas,* the most typical iconography in these works is a red *paliacate* [bandanna].[19] The author continues to conclude that Guadalupe is a representation of an ideal *Zapatista* woman and a warrior.[20] There does not seem to be a specific artwork that has stood out from the modern *Zapatista* movement; there are many small works and murals that support what Tunali's text entails. One of the

[19] Tunali, "The Vision and Practice of Zapatismo and the Zapatista Murals in Chiapas," 440.
[20] Tunali, "The Vision and Practice of Zapatismo and the Zapatista Murals in Chiapas," 440-442.

examples that they mention is a mural outside a chapel in *San Pedro Polhó* [Figure 4].[21]

[21] Cristina Hijar, Zapatista Mural, n.d., Photograph, https://www.poliscritture.it/2023/10/04/murales-zapatisti-progetto-dun-mondo-nuovo/.



[Figure 4] Cristina Hijar, *Zapatista Mural*, Photograph.

The mural displays the Virgin of Guadalupe on the right side with her face covered with a *paliacate*. Behind her, on the left, is a *Zapatista* girl with the same covering on half of her face. The placement of these two individuals, and their shared attire, creates a connection or likeness between them. The side-by-side composition of the mural created a compare-and-contrast-like effect for viewers towards the figures. However, they are isolated from each other as well, which could indicate that despite their connection, there is some disconnection or superiority. It could be read that the Virgin serves the *Zapatista* group but is still a higher being that should be respected or supports Tijen Tunali's idea that the Virgin is viewed as an ideal. Therefore, she should be looked up to.

United Farm Workers

Another significant occasion on which the Guadalupe has been used in the notable form of a political banner was during the United Farm Workers movement, which began in the 1960s. The main goal of the United Farm Workers was to improve working conditions and payment for agricultural workers.[22] Both of the well-known leaders of this movement, Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez, were Mexican American, and Chavez identified as Catholic.[23] Chavez's religious identity is important to consider since it could have influenced his choice to use the Virgin for the movement he was assisting to lead. When looking back on the previous instances with the Virgin of Guadalupe, her image has had little to no alteration from her original portrait in the Tepeyac basilica, where she originated and is presently located. This could be concluded as a sign of respect for her image, which could be influenced by religious beliefs.

From what could be seen thus far in the timeline, the Virgin had been mostly exercised by Mexican or indigenous communities in Mexico. Chavez and many of the farmworkers were Mexican-American. It can be assumed that regional cultural differences could have impacted their association and relationship with this apparition of Mary. According to Mario García, in *The Gospel of César Chávez,* the idea of Guadalupe being part of this movement was inspired by a woman who attended one of the marches who asked Chavez if she could carry her banner of the Virgin; thus, he agreed and decided to maintain this practice.[24] It is intriguing that the idea was not exactly from Chavez but from an individual with lesser influence, a woman with no

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[22] Claire Wolfteich, "Devotion and the Struggle for Justice in the Farm Worker Movement: A Practical Theological Approach to Research and Teaching in Spirituality," Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality 5, no. 2 (2005): 158–75, https://doi.org/10.1353/scs.2006.0022, 161.

[23] Wolfteich, "Devotion and the Struggle for Justice in the Farm Worker Movement: A Practical Theological Approach to Research and Teaching in Spirituality," 161.

[24] García Mario T., The Gospel of César Chávez: My Faith in Action (Lanham: Sheed & Ward: Distributed by National Book Network, 2007), 110–11, 110.

leadership position. Due to his background being Catholic, he could have chosen to maintain her use in the movement just for religious ideas. For instance, he could have utilized and mentioned her as performing righteous behavior or religious duty as an honest cause. García determines that Chavez persisted in using her image because he saw her as "...an image of the struggle of the Mexican people in history and among the farmworkers for their liberation."[25] If this is the case for Chavez, then he saw no difference between himself (a Mexican-American) and Mexicans. Thus, the Guadalupe is not just solely for Mexicans who reside geographically and culturally in Mexico. This demonstrates that the Virgin can cross borders and be used for political purposes by any Mexican and universally.

As mentioned previously, Cesar Chavez was not the only well-known leader of the United Farm Workers. Dolores Huerta is also a well-respected individual who took part in the movement. Claire Wolfteich, in her article *Devotion and the Struggle for Justice in the Farmer Worker Movement,* quotes Huerta's thoughts on the Virgin's use in the movement: "a symbol of the impossible, of doing the impossible to win a victory, in humility…I mean that's the important thing she symbolizes to the union: that with faith you can win. You know with faith you can overcome."[26] Based on what is known about these two activists of the campaign, it can be determined that, yes, Guadalupe's use was religious. However, she was also utilized as a symbol of Mexican nationality and resistance.

Chicano Feminists

[25] García. The Gospel of César Chávez: My Faith in Action (Lanham: Sheed & Ward: Distributed by National Book Network, 2007), 110–11, 110

[26] Wolfteich, "Devotion and the Struggle for Justice in the Farm Worker Movement: A Practical Theological Approach to Research and Teaching in Spirituality," 162.

The next couple of periods of artwork are part of a large movement known as the *Chicano* Movement, which started around the 1970s to the 80s. Charlene Villaseñor Black, in *The Virgin of Guadalupe as an Iconic Image in Mexican Culture,* defines the label *Chicano(a)* as anyone who is Mexican-American who resides in the US.[27] Based on the sources that use this term, the identity label of *Chicano* tends to be used more on the West Coast of the United States. The overall *Chicano(a)* Movement has countless working factors for this section. The focus will be on feminist *Chicana* artists who have made an impact with their manipulation of the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

One of the first things to consider and think about is how *Chicanas* specifically felt about what the image of the Guadalupe meant to them. Many feminist artists who used her image were not themselves religious, but they grew up with her image since their family may have been Catholic. So most of the works do not work with the religious context of Catholicism. *Chicana Sexuality and Gender,* by Debra Blake, sets the perspective of the *Chicana* community:

> As the idealized opposite La Malinche and La Llorona, Guadalupe implicitly represents the domesticated and quiescent roles women were assigned within the movement: cooking food, taking care of children, and standing behind their man. From this perspective, Guadalupe's symbolism assumes meaning contrary to the liberatory significance. Women raised within Mexican Catholic culture grapple with characteristics attributed to La Virgen that encourage acceptance and endurance, rather than self-determination, and reinforce restrictive gender and sexuality roles. As the long-suffering mother of Christ she is considered a passive, submissive role model for Mexican Catholic women, one which encourages piety, purity, virginity, and unquestioning obedience in their primary roles as wife and mother.[28]

Blake's description is a good introduction to the perspective of *Chicana* women and the artists who will be discussed. However, one element she failed to consider in her explanation was the

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[27] Villaseñor Black, "The Virgin of Guadalupe as an Iconic Image in Mexican Culture,", 1.
[28] Debra J Blake, *Chicana Sexuality and Gender*, *Duke University Press EBooks* (Duke University Press, 2008), https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822381228, 59.

perspective of those *Chicana* women who do not have much religious knowledge of the Virgin. As mentioned previously, not all the artists that will be analyzed have this knowledge, although in general they seem to share this perspective on the Guadalupe.

It has been established that before the *Chicano* Movement, the majority of images of the Guadalupe were not altered and stayed fixed to their original image at Tepeyac. These more traditionally leaning works have characteristics that could have been interpreted as submissive and nonsexual. Holly Siebert Kawakami & Avinash Thombre highlight these elements in their text, *The Evolving Genre of 'Our Lady of Guadalupe': A Feminist Analysis.* They identified that Guadalupe's attire is modest and fully covered, her gaze is always fixated downward, her body has no signs of movement, and at times she is depicted with a child and babies.[29] Guadalupe's attire and body are fully covered in the majority of her depictions to avoid sexualization, or it could insinuate that she believes in modesty and is an asexual being. Her downward stare adds to her being perceived as submissive, since direct eye contact could be viewed as intimidating by a viewer, or, rather, intimate. However, since she is never looking directly at the viewer, she gives the impression of being shy and gentle. As a result, she can be read as a submissive individual. Due to the fixed pose the Virgin is typically in, she is considered an inactive individual, as if she is waiting to be told what to do, which additionally adds to her submissive reputation.

This is not to argue that this is the intended meaning of the creation of the Guadalupe. These visual details provide clarity on some *Chicanas*' interpretation of what she represents to them. Of course, this perspective can be different depending on the individual; Mexican women may not share the same view, but since the Virgin is iconic to Mexican Catholicism, these

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[29] Holly Siebert Kawakami and Avinash Thombre, "The Evolving Genre of 'Our Lady of Guadalupe': A Feminist Analysis," *Texas Speech Communication Journal* 30, no. 2 (2006): 21–33, 123-125.

interpretations could be seen as standards and expectations, especially since her image could be seen practically everywhere in Mexican culture.

A work to start with is Ester Hernández's *La Virgen de Guadalupe Defendiendo los Derechos de los Xicanos (1975)*[30] [Figure 5].



[Figure 5] Ester Hernández, La Virgen de Guadalupe Defendiendo los Derechos de los Xicanos, 1975, etching and aquatint on paper, plate, Smithsonian American Art Museum.

In this artwork, there is a woman who is meant to be seen as the Guadalupe. There are traditional elements that signify this, although there are some alterations to the traditional image that make her significantly different. The details that resemble the traditional look are the sun rays and a podium of a black crescent moon. She has the Guadalupe's iconic draped cloth that is patterned with stars. However, this cloth is seemingly about to be knocked off since she is in motion. Her main articles of clothing have changed to some kind of martial arts uniform. This figure is doing a fighting gesture, swinging a high kick as she looks to the right side of the

[30] Ester Hernández, *La Virgen de Guadalupe Defendiendo Los Derechos de Los Xicanos*, 1975, etching and aquatint on paper, 1975.

composition. The angel that is traditionally always below her becomes more significant in his presence by having a fiercer facial expression. His eyebrows are angled downward, and his mouth takes the form of a frown.

These alterations mentioned from this work can be interpreted in many various and vast ways. This more animated version of the Guadalupe formed Debra Blake's interpretation that the Virgin is a more self-sufficient being, that she can defend her people, and her kick could signify breaking through barriers and expectations for *Chicanas*.[31] One could argue that this interpretation of autonomy was obvious, especially in contrast with Guadalupe's traditional representation. However, it is pivotal to consider the fact that this specific piece is one of the first-ever feminist *Chicana* works.[32] Anyone who may have come across this piece at the time may not have fully comprehended what the meaning of this work was, especially if there was nothing else to compare it to. It could have just been seen as a criticism of religion, but there was more background behind this work. It was the start of resistance to something much bigger. The inspiration for this work was broken down by Hernández herself:

> When my grandmother died, the funeral parlor gave us a card with the Virgin of Guadalupe on the cover. I remember thinking, "This isn't my grandmother." My grandmother had sixteen kids, worked years in the fields and had a hard, but beautiful life. She was a strong and powerful woman, so I decided to change the image.[33]

Based on the artist's words, she sees the image of the Virgin as a tool to change, as a form of representation for *Chicana* women. Her mentioning that her grandmother did not fit the image of the Virgin implies that Hernández viewed the Guadalupe's traditional image as an unsuitable and inaccurate depiction of Mexican-American women. The changes to Guadalupe's submissiveness

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[31] Blake, *Chicana Sexuality and Gender*, 60.
[32] Clara Román-Odio, Sacred Iconographies in Chicana Cultural Productions (New York: Palgrave MacMillian, 2013), 33.
[33] Román-Odio, Sacred Iconographies in Chicana Cultural Productions, 33,

was a political resistance to gender roles, misogyny, and the patriarchy. Hernández's work was only the beginning of Guadalupe's utilization as a tool for feminism. To confirm this interpretation, the artist shared:

> For me, the symbol, of the Chicana Karate figure represents women becoming an active participant, breaking out of some traditional images—the colonial mentality, while maintaining her culture, informing, teaching, and learning from her people; taking a militant stand on all fronts, on behalf of the Raza: La Chicana at the forefront of the arts, in schools, as writers…whatever. Encompassing everything.[34]

Another well-known feminist *Chicana* artist and work is Yolanda López's *Guadalupe Triptych*[35] [Figure 6].



[Figure 6] Yolanda López, *Guadalupe Triptych*, 1978 (left: "Victoria F. Franco: Our Lady of Guadalupe," oil pastel and collage on paper; center: "Margaret F. Stewart: Our Lady of Guadalupe," oil pastel and paint on paper; right: "Portrait of the Artist as the Virgin of Guadalupe," oil pastel and paint on paper)

This work is a three-part series, all of which have references to the Guadalupe. The first work has an older woman seated on some kind of chair that is draped with the star-patterned cloak. The angel that usually accompanies the Guadalupe appears on the left of the older woman

[34] Román-Odio, Sacred Iconographies in Chicana Cultural Productions, 34,
[35] Yolanda López, *Guadalupe Triptych*, 1978, Oil Pastels, 1978.

in the composition. The traditional sunrays are depicted, although the older woman wears more ordinary clothing. She wears a pink-patterned dress with flats. She makes direct contact with the viewer, although she seems to look a bit exhausted from her facial expression. Her eyebrows are angled upward, she does not smile, and her wrinkles are emphasized with shading. The black crescent moon is ingeniously hidden as a necklace on the woman's chest. In a demure fashion, the woman possesses a knife and snakeskin on her lap.

The second image from the series is of a middle-aged woman hunched over a sewing table. She has notable short hair and glasses while she is sewing the iconic star-patterned cloak. She, too, is wearing an outfit that appears to be made from the same fabric as the older woman. However, the style of the garment is different; it is a sleeveless top. The angel and the black crescent moon are poking out of the cloak while it is draped off the table. The angel has his hand resting on his face, looking like he is admiring the woman or stuck in thought. The sunrays remain present in this piece.

The last image in the series is one of a young lady; she's smiling while she is running towards the viewer. On her left hand she is choking a snake, and in her right she holds a grip on the star-patterned cloak. She wears a dress that lifts due to her running, which reveals her thighs. As a result of her activity, she runs over the angel, who lies down motionless. The sunrays remain, although they are a slightly different color than the rest, with a hint of grayish-blue. She, too, wears a dress in a more modern style with the same patterned fabric. The moon in this piece is moderately hidden. It appears under the cloak, perhaps to show it in the distance as if she is jumping out of her position.

All three of these pieces maintain the sunrays, black moon, angel, and the starred cloak. These are items that are known to be part of the original Virgin of Guadalupe's design. She

always has them. Now, going on to the major differences of these portraits. The main subjects of these projects are various age ranges; the reasoning behind this is these women are the artist's grandmother, mother, and herself.[36] This could be supported by their matching outfits. The portrait of the grandmother has the fewest details, but these details are important to the message López wants to convey. Blake inferred that the snakeskin and the knife that is held by the grandmother could be a reference to indigenous roots since Mesoamerican cultures have snake goddesses.[37] Another possibility Debra Blake theorizes for these two details could be that they verbalize the challenges that the grandmother has faced in her life.[38] This theory of the snake and knife used to convey hardships seems especially true with the grandmother's facial expression. As mentioned previously, the grandmother seemed exhausted. Blake describes her expression similarly, "determined, yet worn," and believes that the hardships could've been related to "racism, sexism, and colonialism."[39]

The next portrait, with the artist's mother, has an increase of detail compared to the grandmother's portrait. The most striking detail in this specific piece is the action of her mother, who is actively sewing and working on the cloak. Blake suggested that this action demonstrates that the mother is self-reliant by doing her own domestic work.[40] Many textile works require intense physical labor, so it is hard work that many people take advantage of, for example, in sweatshops. So, someone who can make their own wardrobe is showing significant skills, which proves they can take care of themselves and others. It could be argued that her taking part in sewing reinforces the expectations of women by demonstrating characteristics of a nurturer, but

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[36] Blake, *Chicana Sexuality and Gender*, 60.
[37] Blake, *Chicana Sexuality and Gender*, 60.
[38] Blake, *Chicana Sexuality and Gender*, 60.
[39] Blake, *Chicana Sexuality and Gender*, 60.
[40] Blake, *Chicana Sexuality and Gender*, 61.

in this depiction she is making an item for herself, so she would not be considered a nurturer in this aspect. She is independent.

In the last piece with the self-portrait, there is a significant amount of progression of detail and action. As pointed out earlier, the young woman is wearing a dress that is being lifted due to her sprinting. This could not be mistaken as a minor detail; it is a significant difference to the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe. In *Imagining Mary in Theology and Visual Culture* by Stefanie Knauss, the author best explains that the exposure of the body fights against the modesty that is expected of women and expressed by the Virgin.[41] This detail could be easily missed, and the connection to asexuality could also be missed. This exposure of the young woman's thighs is not meant to be sexual, which was what the artist was aspiring to convey. A woman showing her body or skin is not an invitation to be sexual, but they shouldn't be forced to be dressed modestly to be considered an ideal woman either. Another detail that reinforces this idea is the action taking place in this artwork. Debra Blake clarified that the young woman is not just running forward, but she is "leaping off Guadalupe's pedestal."[42] This behavior can be presumed to be an act of defiance; the artist does not want to take the role of the ideal *Chicana* woman. Her running out displays her bravery and willingness to be the woman she desires to be without a care for society's opinions. She smiles without hesitation, which attests to her confidence.

A detail in the self-portrait that should not be forgotten is the snake that the young woman appears to be choking. Several explanations could be argued for this behavior. As cited before, the grandmother's portrait also has a snake, so this detail could be another reference to

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[41] Stefanie Knauss, "Imagining Mary in Theology and Visual Culture: Between Constraint and Resistance," *Women: A Cultural Review* 30, no. 2 (April 3, 2019): 123–40, https://doi.org/10.1080/09574042.2019.1600309, 127.
[42] Blake, *Chicana Sexuality and Gender*, 61.

indigenous culture as well. This may not be likely since the young woman appears to be harming it, and then this would be read as self-deprecating. Debra Blake comes to two possible meanings of this animal's presence: "as a weapon or as a captured enemy, indicating female power," or a representation of "female sexuality, appearing as a vital element of the women's self-concept."[43] There do not seem to be any other elements that support the idea of sexuality in this image, and it does not seem like an aspect that the artist would be concerned about. Neither of the portraits have any obvious references to sexuality other than their female sex. Therefore, it could be possible that the snake could be a vehicle of female power.

To sum up the series, Yolanda López creates these personal family and self-portraits to demonstrate her resistance to the patriarchal expectations of *Chicanas*. She conveys that women should be free to do as they like, hardworking, independent, and proud of their Mexican identity. López used Guadalupe as a tool since she is a popular female image that reinforces these ideals, and because she is a visual representation of the Mexican identity. Due to the importance of the Virgin and the drastic alterations of her image, she reinforces her love of her Mexican-ness to emphasize the love of herself or her community. She is making a political and societal statement but does not reject her identity, as that is not what her series is about. Yolanda López is a proud *Chicana* and a proud woman.

The last work and artist for feminist *Chicana* artwork is *Our Lady (1999)* by Alma López [Figure 7].[44]

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[43] Blake, *Chicana Sexuality and Gender*, 61.
[44] Alma López, Our Lady, 1999, inkjet print on canvas, 1999, Smithsonian American Art Museum.



[Figure 7] Alma López, *Our Lady*, 1999, inkjet print on canvas, Smithsonian American Art Museum.

Our Lady is an altered image of a *Chicana* woman taking the form of the image of Guadalupe. She looks straight forward with no smile and her hands on her hips. Notably, she does not have much clothing on her breasts, and her genitals are covered by roses. The iconic cloak the Virgin typically has on is not star-patterned and instead has an edited pattern that resembles Mesoamerican indigenous stonework. Below her, she still has an angel that holds her up, although the angel is female in this image and nude, revealing her breasts. The angel does not have the usual angel wings but monarch butterfly wings. The background of this image has the usual iconography of sunrays and the black moon. An interesting component of this background is that it appears to take place on a theater stage.

Our Lady is a recognizable artwork due to the recorded reaction that it had with the *Chicano* community when it was first displayed. As mentioned by Debra Blake, this work was featured in an exhibition in 2001 at Santa Fe's Museum of Art and received backlash, which

resulted in many demanding that the piece be removed.[45] The disapproval for this artwork was motivated by the exposure of skin the woman has, which suggests that the audience interpreted this work as provocative and disrespectful to the religious figure. There is a connection between this piece and Yolanda López's self-portrait. Both women have the body language of someone who is confident. They both demonstrate this attitude, although the artists give this impression through different methods. Yolanda López's work relies on action to build confidence in her self-portrait, which is a contrast to the Virgin's inactive state. Alma López's image relies heavily on body exposure to represent the confidence in one's physical state. Both artworks decided to have some skin exposed, which is a drastic alteration of the traditional image of the Virgin. Some may believe that is blasphemous, as can be shown by the public's reaction to this image. Alma López's work does show a significantly larger amount of skin than Yolanda López's work. As established, exposed body parts or revealing skin could be read as sexual. Due to the amount of skin that Alma López decided to reveal, it may have resulted in the controversy and backlash that she received. Stefanie Knauess was quick to identify that Alma López's work is a critique of heteronormativity.[46]

Another major connection between Alma López's work and her peer Yolanda López's is that, even though both pieces are trying to resist the expectations of women, they can still express their love for their *Chicana* identities. A detail that could indicate this is the monarch butterfly, which Alma López explains:

> The Monarch butterfly is most known for its natural yearly migration from Mexico to the northern U.S. However, the most remarkable aspects of this migration is that on its flight back to Mexico or the northern U.S. it is no longer the original butterfly, but it is the child returning on genetic memory. Like the

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[45] Blake, *Chicana Sexuality and Gender*, 66.
[46] Knauss, "Imagining Mary in Theology and Visual Culture: Between Constraint and Resistance," 133.

> Monarch butterfly, indigenous people of this continent have migrated between both countries.[47]

This is not the only detail that refers back to the possible identities Mexicans could fall into. As mentioned earlier, there appears to be an Aztec stone relief sculpture of *Coyolxāuhqui* (the moon goddess).[48] The choice to include the stonework pattern reveals López's indigenousness as part of her identity as a *Chicana* feminist.

An interesting component to consider about this piece is that it includes a participant that takes the form of the image of the Guadalupe. Even if this woman was not the artist of this image, there had to be a reason that she was in agreement to be used as a representation of the Virgin and this message that the artist wanted to voice. Debra Blake unveils the perspective of the model, "Raquel Salinas, the actual woman photographed as Guadalupe wearing a swimsuit, says her motivation for modeling Guadalupe was to advance her own healing process after being raped at age eighteen. Burdened with guilt and shame, she underwent a long process to reclaim her psyche and body."[49] In this situation, Salinas is fighting back against being the ideal obedient woman. She is not letting her trauma take control of her and is using this piece as a mechanism to un-objectify herself. In this instance, women's bodies are more than sexual objects. In essence, Stefanie Knauss says, "If Mary has/is a body that experiences pain and pleasure, that desires and is desired, that provides nourishment and strength, that changes and ages under the strains of a hard life, then women's bodies no longer have to be hidden and denied in order to live up to the ideal."[50]

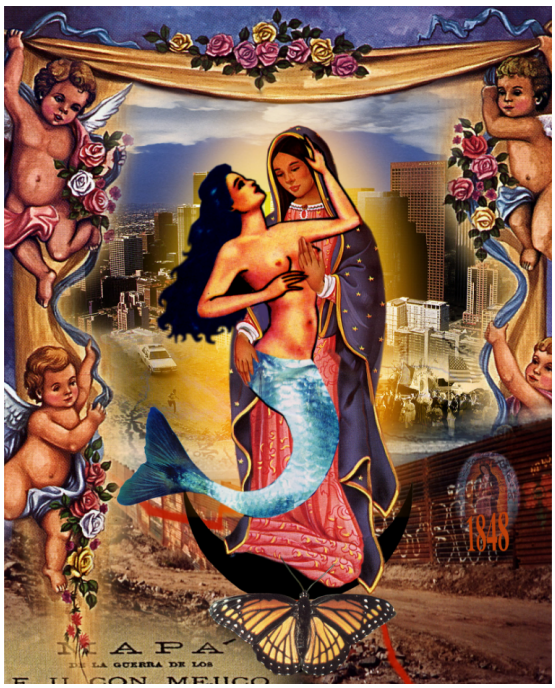
Chicano LGBTQ+

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[47] Guisela Latorre, "Icons of Love and Devotion: Alma López's Art," *Feminist Studies* 34, no. 1/2 (2008): 131–50, https://doi.org/10.2307/20459185, 134.
[48] "Alma López Our Lady Digital Art," Almalopez.com, 2026, http://almalopez.com/ORnews2/021200lf.html.
[49] Blake, *Chicana Sexuality and Gender*, 66.
[50] Knauss, "Imagining Mary in Theology and Visual Culture: Between Constraint and Resistance," 135.

Between feminist *Chicana* artists and *Chicano* LGBTQ+ artwork, there are plenty of similar thoughts that surround the concepts of the art. Both of these communities feel as if the traditional image of the Virgin does not fit in the wide variety of identities included with being Mexican. The impression that they have is that the Guadalupe only caters to a specific group of people. The LGBTQ+ *Chicano* community utilized her image to fight for their right to exist as Mexicans, although they do this slightly differently than the *Chicana* feminist artists. The *Chicana* feminists' artworks tend to replace the image of the Guadalupe with someone personal: themselves, family, or a real person. The LGBTQ+ community does alter the Virgin's circumstances as a character, which can be seen with the Mexican Independence and Revolution. It is best to describe this as an alternative universe for the story of the Virgin of Guadalupe. In the Mexican Independence and Revolution, her aura is more interpreted as a fighter and fierce.

An art series that shows this method is in *Lupe and the Sirena* by Alma López, who is an artist that has been discussed in the previous section [Figure 8].[51]



[51]Alma López, Lupe & Sirena in Love, 1999, Digital Collage, 1999, https://almalopez.myportfolio.com/lupe-sirena.

[Figure 8] Alma López, *Lupe & Sirena,* 1999. Digital Print.

This is a multi-series of artworks that depicts a growing relationship between both individuals, Guadalupe and *Sirena*. Some important events that are shown in these works are hand-holding, sexual touch, and some kind of guardianship as a team over Los Angeles. The Virgin's lover in this story is the *Sirena*. Stefanie Knauss identifies this figure as, "the mermaid, a figure from the popular Mexican *lotería* (bingo)."[52] As can be determined, *Sirena* is also a recognizable female figure in Mexican culture, although she is not a religious figure like the Virgin of Guadalupe. The element of shock in this series is the sexualization of Guadalupe, since she is known to be a Catholic image. It has been settled that she is supposed to be an innocent and asexual being. López is giving her sexuality by having her commit sexual actions like embracing *Sirena*'s breasts. Perhaps López's goal was to normalize same-sex relationships by demonstrating that despite her Virgin's lesbian sexuality, she can still do her duties as a protector of Mexicans. Guisela Latorre's *Icons of Love and Devotion: Alma Lopez's Art* interpreted the image of the lesbian lovers above Los Angeles as a stance that the Virgin is open to anyone's love and devotion, no matter their identity.[53] In these sequences of artworks, the Virgin becomes a character that projects the identity of the community that is utilizing her. López is not putting her own image in her work, but she is still projecting her identity onto the Guadalupe for her to address her political message. So far, the use of the Virgin of Guadalupe by the *Chicano* community has liberated her role and provided creativity to those who wish to use her for their political conversations.[54]

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[52] Knauss, "Imagining Mary in Theology and Visual Culture: Between Constraint and Resistance," 131.
[53] Guisela Latorre, "Icons of Love and Devotion: Alma López's Art," *Feminist Studies* 34, no. 1/2 (2008): 131–50, https://doi.org/10.2307/20459185, 135.
[54] Knauss, "Imagining Mary in Theology and Visual Culture: Between Constraint and Resistance," 132.

Another LGBTQ+ artist to look at is Ester Hernández and her screen print *La Ofrenda (1988).*[55] [Figure 9].



[Figure 9] Ester Hernández, *La Ofrenda*, from the National Chicano Screenprint Taller, 1988-1989, 1988, screenprint on paper, Smithsonian American Art Museum.

This work presents the viewer with a woman's bare back. On her back is a colorful tattoo of the Virgin of Guadalupe as her traditional image. The woman glances back at the viewer. She has a noticeable alternative haircut rather than having straightened hair. It could be described as a mohawk haircut. At the bottom left corner of the composition, there is a hand offering a flower towards the direction of the Virgin tattoo. Many feminist or LGBTQ+ artists outside the *Chinaco(a)* Movement have used flowers to represent female genitalia. The flower in this print may or may not be intended to be read this way. However, it could be read in such a way due to the placement of this flower, right where the Virgin's genitals would be located.

[55] Ester Hernández, *La Ofrenda*, 1988, Screenprint, 1988, Washington, D.C., Smithsonian American Art Museum.

Another clue to this work's subject being about an oppressed community is the fashion choice of this woman; she has an unconventional hairstyle and skull earrings. Without implying that this fashion look is specific to the LGBTQ+ community, it is clear that she is representing someone who is not considered the norm in her society. The hand that is offering the flower does not give much indication of who the person is, although we could presume that the person is a lesbian lover of some sort. Debra Blake says, "The offering of the rose, itself a revision of popular representations of heterosexual desire."[56] There is no suggestion that the tattooed woman in this work was supposed to be a self-portrait or a specific person. Even so, this work uses a narrative-like method to advocate for the existence of LGBTQ+ *Chicanos*/Mexicans. The plain way to explain the narrative that is taking place in this work is that a *Chicana* lesbian is afraid to accept affection from a lover due to the expectations to be heterosexual. This work could also serve as commentary on the religious view of homosexuality or being sinful, and the image could be perceived in various directions.

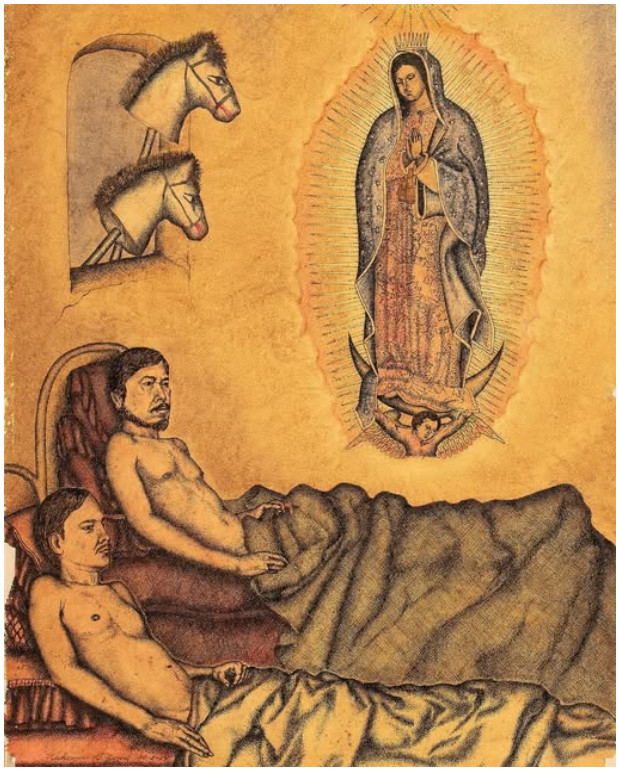
The last artist in this section that should be addressed is Nahum Zenil. His work could be considered an oddball compared to the other art that has been discussed. To start, he is one of the first male artists who is brought up in this conversation of the political use of the Virgin. Most of the artists who have been conversed about have been female. This could be because Guadalupe is a female figure, and these artists may be self-reflecting themselves in the Virgin's image. The only strong connections that these female artists have with the Virgin are their nationality and their reality as women. It brings up the question of how a male artist would relate to or use Guadalupe's image. Another major difference is that Zenil is not *Chicano*; he is Mexican. Even

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[56] Blake, *Chicana Sexuality and Gender*, 100.

if this detail feels minuscule; it is actually very significant. It is important to account for cultural and societal differences within these communities, given their geographical diversity.

Zenil's artwork similarly uses the Virgin as a storytelling device for LGBTQ+ *Chicanos*. Zenil has several works that use the image of the Virgin. A prominent work he had made was *Gracias Virgencita de Guadalupe* (1984)[57] [Figure 10].



[Figure 10] Nahum B. Zenil, *Gracias virgencita de Guadalupe,* mixed media on wood, 1984.

In this piece, it can be seen that the Virgin is in her traditional image. She is above two nude men lying next to each other. The two men are on separate beds looking up at the Guadalupe. Their expression could be perceived as off-guard or awkward. They're not smiling, and they covered their lower body parts with the bed covers. Above the pair is an unglazed window with two toy stick horses popping into the room.

[57] Nahum Zenil, *Gracias Virgencita de Guadalupe*, 1984, Mixed Media on Wood, 1984, San Francisco, CA, The Mexican Museum.

The scene that is being represented in this image feels partially tense and awkward. Justin Sabia-Tanis' *The Virgin Mary Became My Mother* mentions that the beds being separate could create the notion of sexual repression of homosexuality.[58] With the body language that the men are enacting, this could be factual and be read by a viewer. There is tension between both of these men; it feels as if they were caught participating in something sinful in front of a holy figure. Another questionable detail that Zenil added was the stick horses. According to Tanis, horses are usually a sign of *machismo,* specifically referring to cowboys, although the horses being pictured as toys adds innocence.[59] It is thought-provoking that there are two horses directly above the pair of men. The reality could be that the horses are not actually present in the space. It could be viewed as a young boy's expectations of themselves. This expectation could be shame that prevents the pair from accepting their homosexual identity.

Zenil forms a statement with this piece; it is as if he is verbalizing the Guadalupe's stance on this topic of homosexuality. The Virgin remains tranquil in this work while she is facing this revelation. Her eyes remain downward, and her body has very little movement. It could be said that the expectation of disapproval would be anger or disgust. There is no trace of the Virgin feeling such a way. As Tanis best states, "This Virgin is no prude but rather a holy figure who embraces all life, including its most private intimate moments enacted by men who love her *and* who love other men."[60]

Migration, Immigrants, ICE Raids

Based on the assortment of political artworks that could be found featuring references to or the image of the Virgin herself, the political issue of immigration has been more of a

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[58] Justin Sabia-Tanis, "The Virgin Mary Became My Mother," Unlocking Orthodoxies for Inclusive Theologies, 2020, 73–93, 80.
[59] Sabia-Tanis, "The Virgin Mary Became My Mother," 80.
[60] Sabia-Tanis, "The Virgin Mary Became My Mother," 81.

contemporary topic. Most of these works on this topic have been from the 20th to 21st century and from the United States. This most likely is a response to the racism and tension towards the Latino and Hispanic community due to an increase in immigration. Since these works are more recent, there is still room for them to grow. As far as it can be seen, this topic has no rules or strong patterns like the other categories of works that have been reviewed, but their usage remains personal and political.

The first artist to look at in this topic is Ester Hernández's *Wanted (2010)* screen print[61] [Figure 11].



[Figure 11] Ester Hernández, *Wanted*, 2010, screenprint on paper, Smithsonian American Art Museum.

[61] Ester Hernández, *Wanted*, 2010, Screenprint, 2010, Washington, D.C., Smithsonian American Art Museum.

The image takes the format of a criminal wanted poster. The criminal is listed as the Virgin of Guadalupe; the mugshot is a realistic, photograph-like image of a *Chicana* woman wearing the traditional star-patterned cloak. In the direct, forward-facing mugshot, she has a smug smile, and her hands are together in prayer. Below her is a description of her looks, crimes, role, warnings, and rewards. It can be identified that Hernández decided to use the technique of replacing the figure of the Guadalupe with a 'real' woman; there was no information on who or if the person in the image is real, like the model in Alma López's work. Either way, she looks very realistic.

The decision to label the Virgin as a criminal is bold since she is overall deemed as 'good' and 'innocent.' This poster goes against the fixed nature of the Guadalupe. Clara Román-Odio clarifies Hernández's motive for this work: "[as] in protest of the Arizona Immigration Bill 1070, a law that aims to identify, prosecute, and deport undocumented immigrants."[62] She then elaborates, "This law makes it illegal for a person to simply walk the street without immigration documents."[63] Because this piece is against this law, it puts the Virgin in the situation of being a target of the law itself. She takes on the appearance of what some may consider an immigrant since she has features of a *Chicano* woman, which opens the possibility of her even being a victim of racial profiling. [64] What is increasingly intriguing is that the deposition below gives the Virgin a specific reason why she is targeted. She is titled as a trafficker of illegal immigrants, or some may say *a Coyote*.[65] In this case, this may not be the scenario of racial profiling, but rather, she is the support system and the guardian of those who cross the US-Mexico border. Hernández's work is building and using the method of a narrative. Hernández juxtaposed the

[62] Román-Odio, Sacred Iconographies in Chicana Cultural Productions, 106.
[63] Román-Odio, Sacred Iconographies in Chicana Cultural Productions, 106.
[64] Román-Odio, Sacred Iconographies in Chicana Cultural Productions, 108.
[65] Román-Odio, Sacred Iconographies in Chicana Cultural Productions, 109.

idea of the Virgin of Guadalupe being a protector with that of a Coyote. As written in the poster itself:

> For over 160 years La Virgen de Guadalupe has accompanied countless men, women, and children illegally into the U. S. A. She has given limitless aid and comfort to unidentified suspects at the time of their death, especially in the desert areas near the U.S./ Mexico border.[66]

Hernández is creating a form of resistance by making the traditional duties of the Virgin into a more menacing light. The Virgin's company is actively a crime rather than holy.

Another work of interest is that of Consuelo Jiménez Underwood's *Virgen de los Caminos (1994)*[67] [Figure 12].



[Figure 12] Consuelo Jiménez Underwood, *Virgen de los Caminos*, 1994, embroidered and quilted cotton and silk with graphite, Smithsonian American Art Museum.

[66]Ester Hernández, *Wanted*.

[67] Consuelo Jiménez Underwood, *Virgen de Los Caminos*, 1994, embroidered and quilted cotton and silk with graphite, 1994, Washington, D.C., Smithsonian American Art Museum.

On this cloth, there is an embroidery of the Virgin of Guadalupe at the center of the work, although she looks different. Her appearance is mostly similar to her traditional one, with one major difference: she is a skeleton. The rest of the embroidery design is barbed wire and flowers framing the composition of the cloth. This cloth is made with a quilt-like technique with a stitching that resembles a family running away. This detail is very difficult to see, since it is done with transparent thread. The design can be seen in other work Underwood has created, like in [Figure 13].[68] This design is repeated throughout [Figure 12].



[68] Consuelo Jiménez Underwood, Run, Jane, Run!, 2004, woven cotton, linen, barbed wire, caution tape, 2004, Washington, D.C., Smithsonian American Art Museum.

[Figure 13] Consuelo Jiménez Underwood, Run, Jane, Run!, 2004, woven cotton, linen, barbed wire, caution tape, Smithsonian American Art Museum.

This hidden design of the family can be a visual representation of how society does not care for or 'see' immigrants. Hence, they're invisible. Román-Odio points this detail out: "The word caution and the image of a running family appear throughout the background but are stitched in nearly invisible white thread, suggesting that undocumented immigrants are invisible in the eyes of U.S. citizens."[69] If this work were able to be held, it would create a sense of intimacy with the viewer. It could be debated that the Virgin's image is a device of empathy.

The artist is from a family of agricultural workers who migrated and are part of the *Huichol* indigenous community.[70] Her background is important to consider due to the medium being common in indigenous groups, specifically working with textiles.[71] By working with the medium of textile, Underwood is affirming her indigenous identity as part of the Mexican identity. Artistic practices are important to observe since it is clear that this indigenous tradition is still active in Mexican culture. The medium, like embroidery and textiles, may be a practice that travels with someone when they migrate and is passed down. That is seen with the artist Underwood. Cristina Serna, in *Locating a Transborder Archive of Queer Chicana Feminist and Mexican Lesbian Art,* specifies that this textile work was a "response to the anti-immigrant climate created by Proposition 187 in California."[72] If the viewer does not take a closer look at this piece, this political message would most likely be missed. There is not much from a distance that can be seen that references immigration in any form.

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[69] Román-Odio, "Transnational Feminism, Globalization, and the Politics of Representation in Chicana Visual Art," 33.
[70] Román-Odio, Sacred Iconographies in Chicana Cultural Productions, 109.
[71] Román-Odio, Sacred Iconographies in Chicana Cultural Productions, 109.
[72] Cristina Serna, "Locating a Transborder Archive of Queer Chicana Feminist and Mexican Lesbian Feminist Art," Feminist Formations 29, no. 3 (2017): 49–79, https://doi.org/10.1353/ff.2017.0030, 60.

The driving political force of this textile piece is the small details. It brings up the question of why Underwood used this hidden-like method for something that is so important to her. Perhaps she saw the value of an audience not being able to quickly understand her statement in the work as it could emphasize the topic being overlooked. Or maybe she did not want this message to be understood by everyone who sees this work. There could be a specific audience that she is trying to reach. To address a more visible detail, the barbed wire, Clara Román-Odio interpreted it as "the literal and truly painful border between the two countries that separates insiders from outsiders."[73] Román-Odio may have come to this conclusion because barbed wire is typically used to keep something unwanted out, usually with a fence. If someone were to physically touch the wire, it would inflict pain. In the case of immigration, it could also cause physical pain during the journey, but also mental pain. Here she is being used in her traditional role as a religious figure. There is some ambiance of sadness and delicateness to this work. Likely to make an audience question their morals or opinions on the experiences of illegal immigrants and think about the pain they may have endured.

The Virgin of Guadalupe, over her years of existence, became a literal representation of her people in artwork, Mexicans. They use her to advocate for their identity, the right to exist, and validation. There are many different methods and movements that she has become a part of. However, her political journey is not over. There has been an increase in the use of her image in the present day. And it has been in multiple political causes, not just one particular movement. People have created new methods on how they use her image to share their messages. Her popularity has even led her to being used by non-Mexicans for political messages. Across these

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[73] Román-Odio, "Transnational Feminism, Globalization, and the Politics of Representation in Chicana Visual Art," 33.

different movements, the Virgin of Guadalupe is a figure who provided for those that needed her most.

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